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# The Nation.

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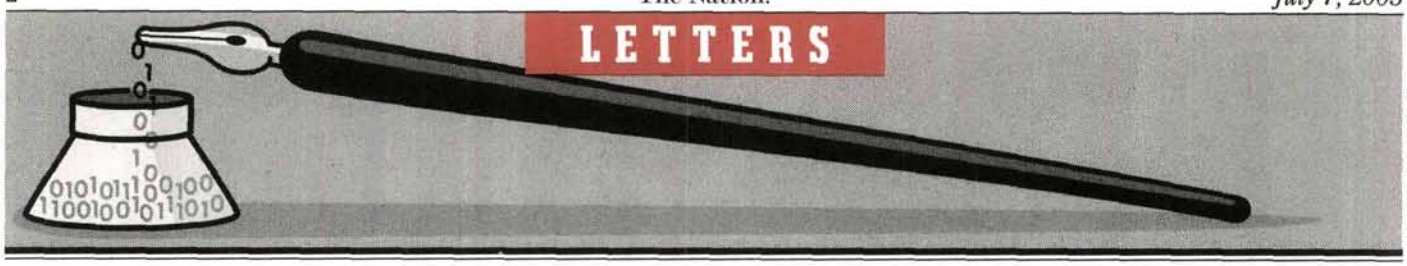


CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

## AFL-CIO: WASHINGTON OR WORKERS?

*Caracas*

■ In "Labor's Cold War" [May 19], Tim Shorrock does an excellent job of showing how and why the AFL-CIO has failed to break with its cold war legacy of placing Washington's interests ahead of those of the workers. However, in his discussion of the AFL-CIO's disgraceful support for coup plotters against Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, Shorrock leaves out one relevant detail. He quotes the AFL-CIO as justifying its backing of the totally discredited Venezuelan Confederation of Workers (CTV) on grounds that "we assisted a process that actually brought more of the left, and including some elements sympathetic to [Chávez's] redistributive rhetoric...to the leadership of the CTV."

In fact, there is no current in the CTV at the national level that has questioned the confederation's obsession with overthrowing Chávez by any means possible—even to the detriment of worker objectives. Who were these CTV "leftists" whose efforts the AFL-CIO assisted?

STEVE ELLNER

*Ukiah, Calif.*

■ Tim Shorrock's article is welcome and timely. John Sweeney is following in another Lane Kirkland tradition by reaffirming labor's unconditional support for Israel. Last year he spoke at a major right-wing Israel Day rally in Washington and pledged to continue the AFL-CIO's unqualified support for the Jewish state. Many if not most of the largest unions have invested millions of dollars of their members' dues in State of Israel bonds, which they bought at low interest as political favors to the Israel lobby. (Many states and cities have done the same.) In essence, they have bet the future retirement of their workers on the health of the Israeli economy, thereby forcing the AFL-CIO and Congress to make sure that the US taxpayers keep Israel afloat.

JEFF BLANKFORT

*Bethesda, Md.*

■ Tim Shorrock's piece is so poorly conceived and misleading on the international role of the AFL-CIO in the cold war era, that one is tempted to dismiss it. Yet I can't resist responding to one example of Shorrock's caricature of reality, his approving citation of Ambassador Robert White's statement that AIFLD—the arm of the AFL-CIO in Latin America—"became a total instrument of US foreign policy" in El Salvador.

I was director of AIFLD's Agrarian Affairs in the 1980s during the Salvadoran land reform programs, which AIFLD supported at the cost of lives and unceasing attacks from right and left extremes. AIFLD was at odds with the US Mission in El Salvador on these programs. We received financial assistance from Congress, which provided support to the agrarian unions that led the reform struggle. But that this made AIFLD a "total instrument" of US foreign policy in El Salvador is fiction. US Embassy/AID backing of land reform was at best lukewarm. AIFLD was confronted with questions concerning the too-radical character of the program by "country team" members, expressing reservations concerning economic viability, radicalizing the countryside and victimizing small landlords. US officers weakened the programs by criticizing them with GOES [Government of El Salvador] officials. The GOES, with explicit US approval, cut back the number of land-to-the-tiller beneficiaries by almost 25 percent toward the end of land distribution.

AIFLD was in fact out front seeking to ameliorate rank injustices, encourage campesino political participation and further noncommunist left movements in El Salvador. In any case, AIFLD was not an auxiliary of the US government.

RICHARD LEE HOUGH

*Silver Spring, Md.*

■ Readers might be interested in the access policy of the George Meany Memorial Archives, which houses the records of the AFL-CIO, including those of its international affairs department. That policy states that it is "the consistent practice of the Archives" to make "all AFL-CIO records in its possession...available to qualified researchers after being processed and not before 20 years from the date of their creation."

These restrictions have nothing to do with the control of sensitive information, as Shorrock seems to imply. None of the material is "classified." Archives restrict access to private documents until a decent interval has passed in order to protect the right to privacy of those who created them or who are their subjects, "especially," as stipulated in the Code of Ethics of the Society of American Archivists, "those that had no voice in the disposition of the materials."

I have no idea why the files relating to Brazil in 1964 or to Chile in 1973 in the archives are, in Shorrock's words, "remarkably thin." It could have been the case, as he quotes me saying, that the files were systematically culled. Or perhaps they had little in them to begin with. I really don't know. All I do know is that whatever did (or did not) happen took place before the records ever arrived at the archives. Our collections management practices closely adhere to the highest standards of the archival profession.

MICHAEL MERRILL, *director*
*The George Meany Memorial Archives*

## SHORROCK REPLIES

*Silver Spring, Md.*

■ Thanks to *Nation* readers for all the e-mail about "Labor's Cold War." I agree with Steve Ellner, with whom I spoke several times during my reporting, that the AFL-CIO still has a lot to explain about its relationship with the CTV, particularly during the months leading up to the 2002 coup. But Ellner's question about the "leftists" elected to the CTV board (which the AFL-CIO's Stan Gacek told me included representatives from Chávez's "Bolivariano" labor front) would best be answered by Gacek himself, and will, I hope, be part of the badly needed dialogue on foreign policy between the AFL-CIO and its rank and file. That discussion should also include the issues raised by Jeff Blankfort about the AFL-CIO's longstanding ties to Israel.

Richard Hough's hostile letter deserves some background. AIFLD, unlike the AFL-CIO's other institutes, was a joint venture with the government and big business, sponsored by more than sixty corporations, including Gulf Oil, Johnson & Johnson, Owens-Illinois and Nelson Rockefeller's International Basic Economy Corporation. AIFLD's mission was to convince Latin American trade unionists to avoid the issues of class and US intervention popularized by broad sectors of the left, including Communists and Social Democrats, and embrace private-sector development. "All of us associated with AIFLD have been impressed with its dedication and success in combating Communist infiltration of the Latin American labor movement," J. Peter Grace, AIFLD's longtime chairman and one of the largest US investors in Latin America, wrote President Nixon in a 1969 letter I found in the files.

When Hough was in El Salvador, the country was embroiled in a civil war stemming from social inequities and the violent repression by death squads sponsored by the Salvadoran military and wealthy landowners. After nearly 30,000 activists were murdered, thousands of desperate students, trade unionists, farmers and other opponents of the US-supported government gave up any hope of democratic change and took up arms with the left-wing FMLN. During this time, AIFLD did indeed champion a "land to the tiller" program, based on earlier US campaigns to defeat rural-based leftist insurgencies in Vietnam and the Philippines. AIFLD's attempts to "further noncommunist" movements—Hough's code for weakening popular support for the FMLN—was precisely why it was funded by Congress and embraced by the Reagan Administration.

I don't doubt that AIFLD had differences with embassy bureaucrats and Salvadoran offi-

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## EDITORIALS

# *The War Is Not Over*

George W. Bush recently told a group of GOP backers that those who question his prewar claims about the Iraqi threat are "revisionist historians." But by insisting that his Administration told the truth about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, Bush becomes the revisionist.

Revelations from intelligence and military sources increasingly lead to the conclusion that the Bush Administration misled the American people both about WMDs and about the situation in Iraq. Robert Dreyfuss notes on page 4 that the Administration's dubious "evidence" included information not only from the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans, set up after the White House became unhappy with the CIA's reports, but also from a similar group working for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Ignoring the damage this truth gap does to US credibility abroad, Bush is counting on polls that say most Americans don't care whether Saddam had WMDs, or ties to Al Qaeda, to bring him through in 2004. But a current CBS poll shows that the belief that the Administration overestimated the number of WMDs is now 44 percent, up five points in two weeks. Recently, a ghost of Nixon past, John Dean, evoked the specter of impeachment: "If Bush has taken Congress and the nation into war based on bogus information," Dean wrote, "he is cooked."

In Britain, where journalistic and parliamentary pit bulls are fiercer, former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook shattered Tony Blair's prewar case for war, saying that Iraq "did not represent a clear and serious threat." Over here, Republican Pat Roberts, chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, says he'll examine the prewar intelligence on WMDs in secret hearings, signaling that he's more interested in hiding than seeking answers. His obstructionism is a good argument for the formation of an independent commission, which should hold televised hearings and call witnesses.

Such investigations could also look at the prewar planning (or lack thereof) for the occupation of Iraq. Two months after Bush had his Tom Cruise moment on the flight deck of the Abraham Lincoln, it's clear that the war is far from over. Postwar US casualties—more than fifty soldiers killed—could surpass the casualties of the war itself. The United States faces the prospect of an ugly and lengthy insurgency. Adding to the unrest, the lack of progress toward shifting authority to an interim Iraqi body has intensified resentment against US occupiers and led to fears that Iraq will be riven by competing religious and ethnic factions.

The Administration should heed Adnan Pachachi, the Iraqi elder statesman and ambassador to the United Nations in the 1960s, who recently urged US proconsul Paul Bremer to allow Iraqis to start forming an interim government. The Administration also has to admit that rebuilding Iraq is beyond the capability of the United States alone and that it's time to reach out to the international community for help. Turning over key aspects of Iraq's administration to the UN wouldn't solve all the many problems in Iraq, but it would provide some much-needed legitimacy for the presence of US forces, draw in the support and help of other countries with nation-building experience and allow Islamic countries to contribute peacekeepers and police forces to help restore order.

Clausewitz wrote of the confusion engendered by the "fog of war." Now we are muffled in a "fog of peace." But one thing is clear: The war is not over—and the questioning has just begun.

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# *More Missing Intelligence*

As the Pentagon scours Iraq for weapons of mass destruction and Iraqi links to Al Qaeda, it's increasingly obvious that the Bush Administration either distorted or deliberately exaggerated the intelligence used to justify the war against Iraq. But an even bigger intelligence scandal is waiting in the wings: the fact that members of the Administration failed to produce an intelligence evaluation of what Iraq might look like after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Instead, they ignored fears expressed by analysts at the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the State Department who predicted that postwar Iraq would be chaotic, violent and ungovernable, and that Iraqis would greet the occupying armies with firearms, not flowers.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, it turns out that the same people are responsible for both. According to current and former US intelligence analysts and government officials, the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans funneled information, unchallenged, from Ahmad Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress (INC) to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, who in turn passed it on to the White House, suggesting that Iraqis would welcome the American invaders. The Office of Special Plans is led by Abram Shulsky, a hawkish neoconservative ideologue who got his start in politics working alongside Elliott Abrams in Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson's office in the 1970s. It was set up in fall 2001 as a two-man shop, but it burgeoned into an eighteen-member nerve center of the Pentagon's effort to distort intelligence about Iraq's WMDs and terrorist connections. A great deal of the bad information produced by Shulsky's office, which found its way into speeches by Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and George W. Bush, came from Chalabi's INC. Since the INC itself was sustained by its neocon allies in Washington, including the shadow "Central Command" at the American Enterprise Institute, it stands as perhaps the ultimate example of circular reasoning.

"The same unit [the Office of Special Plans] that fed Chalabi's intelligence on WMD to Rumsfeld was also feeding him Chalabi's stuff on the prospects for postwar Iraq," said a leading US government expert on the Middle East. Says a former US ambassador with strong links to the CIA: "There was certainly information coming from the Iraqi exile community, including Chalabi—who was detested by the CIA and by the State Department—saying, 'They will welcome you with open arms.'" Rumsfeld's willingness to accept that view led him to contradict the Chief of Staff of the US Army, who predicted that it would take hundreds of thousands of troops to control Iraq after the fall of Baghdad, a view that seems prescient today.

According to the former official, also feeding information to the Office of Special Plans was a secret, rump unit established last year in the office of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. This unit, which paralleled Shulsky's—and which has not previously been reported—prepared intelligence reports on Iraq in English (not Hebrew) and forwarded them to the Office of Special Plans. It was created in Sharon's office, not inside Israel's Mossad intelligence service, because the Mossad—which prides itself on extreme professionalism—had views closer to the CIA's, not the

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Pentagon's, on Iraq. This secretive unit, and not the Mossad, may well have been the source of the forged documents purporting to show that Iraq tried to purchase yellowcake uranium for weapons from Niger in West Africa, according to the former official.

The catastrophic result of the belief that it would be easy to pacify postwar Iraq and to create a quisling government in Baghdad, a view that was codified as dogma by the White House, is unfolding daily in Iraq. The country is engulfed in economic and political chaos, armed resistance is growing among the Sunni Muslims in central Iraq, and the powerful and largely hostile Shiite clergy in the south has barely begun to flex its muscles. Not only that, but Iraq watchers report that former Baath Party members are coalescing into nascent political formations, leading armed resistance to the occupation, and that they could emerge as either a strong political party or an underground terrorist group.

Astonishingly, the Bush Administration did not even bother to prepare and internally publish an intelligence estimate about postwar Iraq. (An "estimate," in intelligence jargon, is a formal evaluation produced after sifting, sorting and analyzing various bits and pieces of raw intelligence. So-called National Intelligence Estimates are produced by a unit that reports immediately to Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet.) "Back in the old days, there would have been an estimate," says Raymond McGovern, the twenty-seven-year CIA warrior who formed Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity this past January. "In their arrogance, they didn't worry about it."

Other sources concur. "There was no intelligence estimate done, and there weren't a lot of questions being asked," says Melvin Goodman, a former CIA analyst with the Center for International Policy. "And I know for a fact that at CIA and NESA [the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs], none of them thought that postwar Iraq would be governable." Goodman says that CIA and DIA experts on Iraq were not called in by the Pentagon, and no intelligence roundtables were held to evaluate the situation. Most of the intelligence about how easily the INC and its allies could assume power in Iraq was coming from the INC itself, says a former State Department official. "And I know for a fact that when the subject came up, intelligence officers were extraordinarily skeptical of the exiles' information."

On the eve of the invasion, there was something akin to panic at the Norfolk,Virginia–based US Joint Forces Command, which was responsible for supporting the Pentagon's Iraq task force, then headed by retired Gen. Jay Garner. "They were scared shitless," says a former US official who was in close contact with the command. "They were making it up as they went along." He adds, "There was a great deal of ignorance. They didn't know the names of the [Iraqi] tribes, much less how they relate to each other. They didn't have the expertise, and they didn't have enough time to assemble the expertise."

Such expertise would have allowed the Army to foresee that once Saddam was eliminated, Iranian-backed Shiite forces in southern Iraq, with great influence over the 60 percent of Iraqis who are Shiite, would instantly emerge as a powerful claimant to power. Instead of leading to the democracy envisioned by Bush, the war in Iraq could result in a Shiite-dominated fundamentalist regime, a prospect that is starting to seem the most likely. Not the kind of victory Bush wants to take to the US electorate in 2004.

At a June forum on Iraq at the American Enterprise Institute, Kenneth Katzman, the Middle East specialist at the Congressional Research Service, made a chilling prediction of how the crisis in Iraq will continue to unfold, to the discomfort of his AEI hosts. The Shiite forces in southern Iraq, he said, are content for now to let the Sunni-led guerrillas harass and weaken US troops. "The Shiites hope that Sunni violence in central Iraq will force the United States out, and then the Shiites will move in and pick up the pieces," he said. Despite discord and infighting among the Shiites, Katzman said, most of the Shiite leadership is tied closely to the Iranian government and its ultraconservative clergy. For the rest of this year, he predicted, the US forces in Iraq will be unable to pacify the country or halt the violence, and by next year, as the election nears, there will be enormous political pressure for the United States to withdraw—or, in Washington-speak, to develop an "exit strategy." The question for Bush, according to Katzman, is, Does the United States have the political staying power to continue to sustain one or two casualties a day in October 2004?

That's a question that ought to disturb Karl Rove's sleep. And it might be a question that Democratic would-be opponents of the President ought to ponder. A massive failure of US intelligence has led to an emerging disaster in postwar Iraq. It's a true crisis, and one that could determine the fate of Bush's presidency. In Watergate, the refrain was: "What did the President know, and when did he know it?" Let me suggest a question for Bush, the know-nothing GOP standard-bearer in 2004: "What didn't the President know, and when didn't he know it?" ROBERT DREYFUSS

*Robert Dreyfuss is a* Nation *contributing editor.*

# *Help for Congo*

News from the Ituri region of the misnamed Democratic Republic of Congo in recent weeks has been so grim as to make one want to turn the page or flip the TV channel in despair: tens of thousands of refugees in flight, ethnically based mass murder, killers jubilantly draping themselves in the entrails of their victims, animals eating dead bodies in the streets, 10- and 11-year-old child soldiers bearing AK-47s and hand grenades. Such horrors are but the latest in a civil war whose death toll, in less than five years, is estimated by the International Rescue Committee to be at least 3.3 million. This is the greatest such bloodshed anywhere on earth since the end of World War II. There is no end in sight.

The conflict's origins are many. A hundred years ago, under King Leopold II of Belgium, Congo was the scene of one of the most brutal chapters in the European colonization of Africa. The king's private colony—and to a lesser extent the early Belgian Congo that succeeded it—was based on a draconian system of forced labor that over a forty-year period slashed the territory's population roughly in half, an estimated drop of about 10 million people. But colonialism can't be blamed for everything. The formation of a modern nation-state is a slow, complicated business, which in most of Western Europe was accompanied by much war and violence and took several centuries. To survive in the

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modern world, Africa doesn't have those centuries to spend.

One trigger for Congo's current war came in 1994, when the world did nothing to stop the Rwanda genocide. When the Hutu regime that carried out those killings was overthrown, its leaders and roughly a million other Hutu fled next door to Congo. Angry at continuing attacks mounted from there, the army of the new government in Rwanda occupied part of northeastern Congo.

Seeing the huge, mineral-rich country's sclerotic, corrupt, US-backed Mobutu regime collapse in 1997, nearby African nations quickly joined in dividing the spoils. At various points the armies of seven of them have had troops on Congo's soil. They have formed an ever-changing web of alliances with local warlords and militias, and with the many foreign corporations—American, South African, European—eager to buy Congo's diamonds, gold, timber, copper, cobalt and columbium-tantalum, or coltan. Coltan, which at times has rivaled gold in price per ounce, is used in chips in cell phones and computers; eastern Congo has more than half the world's supply.

This vast wealth in the ground and the lack of a functioning central government have been a catastrophic combination. When there is no money in the public treasury, armies become self-financing networks of miners and smugglers. When there are few schools, they can easily recruit children. When there are few jobs, control of precious minerals becomes the source of all money.

So, what is to be done? Peace won't come easily to Congo, but three things would help:

(1) The current expansion of the minuscule and hamstrung United Nations peacekeeping force now in the country is a step in the right direction, although tragically belated and inadequate. There is an opportunity here for the UN to at last prove that it can be a power for peace in Africa, after shamefully caving in—under US and British pressure—and allowing the Rwanda genocide to happen. Enough troops to provide security for all of Congo, which is as big as the United States east of the Mississippi but has no working road or rail network, is too much to hope for. But a UN force at least several times the size of the 10,800-soldier contingent that UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has proposed could begin to halt the terrible bloodshed in the northeastern corner of the country, where the most carnage has taken place. Its length of service should be seen as a matter of years, and its mission should be drastically toughened to include, for instance, disarming the rival militias—for which there is no mandate now.

The European Union and Canada and various other countries are contributing small numbers of troops. The United States is not, although it voted in the Security Council for the expansion of the UN presence. Besides its small size, however, two things threaten to sap the effectiveness of that force. One is that it is led by France, and Bush is still enraged over French opposition to his conquest of Iraq. The other problem is that Congo's immense bloodletting does not threaten to spill over into the United States and Europe, nor does it threaten to cut off the export of strategic minerals. In such circumstances, will the leaders of countries contributing troops be willing to tolerate having their soldiers killed and wounded? The real test of the UN as a peacekeeping power is in a situation like this, where there is not yet a peace to keep.

(2) Anarchic civil wars like those in Congo are fueled by lucrative minerals. Recognizing how diamonds have helped drive the conflicts in Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone, more than fifty nations recently agreed to cease trading in "conflict diamonds." Remarkably, given its scorn for most international agreements, the United States is a signer. It remains to be seen how much the agreement will be followed. But a recent World Bank study suggests that if conflict diamonds can be outlawed, why not conflict gold and conflict coltan? If stringently enforced, such pacts could begin to slash the funding for the warlords who have ravaged so much of Congo.

(3) Finally, we must stop arming Africa. The United States and France, the two leading neocolonial powers on the continent, have been the worst offenders here. During the 1990s alone, the United States gave more than $200 million worth of equipment and military training to African armies, including six of the seven that have had troops involved in Congo's civil war. This is the modern version of what happened hundreds of years ago, when American and European ship captains used muskets and ammunition as one of the currencies for purchasing slaves from African dealers. This senseless, destructive flow of arms into the continent

(Continued on Page 24)

CALVIN TRILLIN

## THE BALLAD OF PRIVATE LYNCH

Preferring death to getting caught,
She emptied weapons as she fought.
Though shot and stabbed she didn't flinch.
She battled on, did Private Lynch.
Or did she?

Though they could see that she was hurt,
Iraqis treated her like dirt.
They kept her in an awful place,
Ignored her wounds and slapped her face.
Or did they?

By night our special forces made
A daring, dangerous rescue raid.
And, with a withering attack,
They snatched their wounded comrade back.
Or did they?

The Army brass who used this filly,
Deny they sought to gild the lily.
They wouldn't, masked by battle's fog,
Concoct a scheme to wag the dog.
Or would they?

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JONATHAN SCHELL

# The New American Order

Robert Kaplan is a hugely well-informed, indefatigable journalist who combines firsthand reporting, mostly from poor, badly governed or ungoverned countries, with wide reading on the political, economic and ecological ills facing the same lands. He is read with care by policy-makers. His terrain has been the "arc of crisis" that extends from West Africa through the Middle East and Central Asia to the Far East. More recently, he has turned from reporting to prescription. In an article in the July/August *Atlantic Monthly*, he has written "Supremacy by Stealth: Ten Rules for Managing the World."

Because Kaplan is a serious reporter, his recommendations deserve to be taken seriously—the more so as they closely parallel the actual policies of the Bush Administration. That America now "possesses a global empire," he says, is a given—a "cliché"—and the only real question is how it should be run, which is to say how the United States should "manage an unruly world." Others—including Michael Ignatieff, author of the *New York Times Magazine* article "The American Empire: The Burden"; Andrew Bacevich, author of *American Empire*; and Niall Ferguson, author of *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*—have taken the same view. These writers have been equivocal in their support for the project, but Kaplan is an unapologetic imperialist. He frankly advocates a policy of American global domination that others leave between the lines.

An "empire" is more than a foreign policy; it is a form of government, and American citizens might well ask exactly when it was that the United States, formally a republic, became one. It's famously said that the British acquired their empire in a fit of absence of mind. Has it been the same with the United States? When was it decided? But never mind. For now, let's look at what this empire is said to be, and what its apologists want it, and us, to become.

There is, Kaplan admits, a contradiction between the democratic principles the United States professes and the empire it seeks. The solution, he says, must be deception—the "stealth" of his article's title. The United States will have to operate "in the shadows and behind closed doors." The CIA and Special Forces will play key roles. They should not bother too much with instructions from Washington. Kaplan approvingly cites a Marine lieutenant colonel who says, "We back into deployments. There doesn't need to be a policy directive from the Pentagon." Thus is policy made in a stealth empire. Often, he notes, in poor countries a phone call from a US military officer will be more effective than one from an ambassador. In fact, the "very distinction between our civilian and military operations overseas is eroding." Congress should be circumvented. Limitations it places on military operations can be safely ignored by "the U.S. ambassador and the U.S. military commander in the host country."

The historical model for running the world should be "U.S. policy in Latin America over the past several decades," which "exemplifies how we should act worldwide in the foreseeable future." True, the means were "not always pretty," but the results—the defeat of a supposed Sovietization of the region—were excellent. Certainly, the death squads and massacres by elite US-trained forces—for example the almost 800 villagers systematically slaughtered in El Mozote in El Salvador, the killing of more than 200,000 Guatemalans and the torture and "disappearance" of many thousands of oppositionists in Chile and Argentina—were not pretty, but their replication on a global scale will also be worth it for the sake of the new end: "the fundamentally liberal purpose of sustaining the key characteristics of an orderly world."

The Romans once did it (Kaplan especially recommends the policies of emperors Trajan and Hadrian) and the British once did it. Now it is the United States' turn. Yet in Kaplan's telling, a shadow falls over the realization of this vision: the war in Vietnam. He approvingly quotes a Green Beret: "I wish people in Washington would totally get Vietnam out of their system." Kaplan, too, wants to "bring back the old rules," by which he means the "pre–Vietnam War rules by which small groups of quiet professionals would be used to help stabilize or destabilize a regime." Assassination will become more important and "feasible," especially with the help of "satellites that can track the neurobiological signatures of individuals." Kaplan strikes a rare romantic, almost Kiplingesque note in his description of these secretive professionals, who, he writes, "will find the right hinge in a given situation to change history."

And international law? It will be tossed on the same scrapheap as the domestic law embodied in constitutional constraints. Just as there will be "less time for democratic consultation," "the so-called international community may gradually lose relevance." The United Nations in particular will have no place under the new rules. After all, the Security Council "represents an antiquated power arrangement unreflective of the latest wave of U.S. military modernization in both tactics and weaponry."

The media, too, must be neutralized. Their problem is that they have a way of "undermining political authority." The solution is to improve state propaganda: "Just as leading companies harvest the best former government officials, our government will have to find the budget and the will to hire away the best communicators for this marketing effort."

In one respect, at least, Kaplan departs from current Administration policy. He prefers small, clandestine operations to large-scale ones like the Iraq war. The latter may become a "rallying point around which lonely and alienated people in a global mass society can define themselves through an uplifting group identity." Better to keep public opinion "as divided as possible."

On almost all other points, Kaplan appears to be in agreement with the Bush Administration. There is a word for this policy: militarism. Militarism was responsible for the fascist takeover of Japan in the 1930s, and the very region that Kaplan cites as a model—Latin America—also has extensive experience of its domestic results. We can be glad that Kaplan has the honesty to set forth the imperial vision with rare frankness, even as we strain every nerve to assure that this nightmare never becomes reality.

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*Jonathan Schell is the author of the just-published* The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People *(Metropolitan).*

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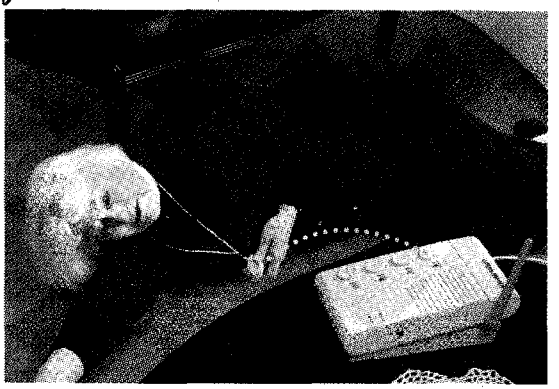

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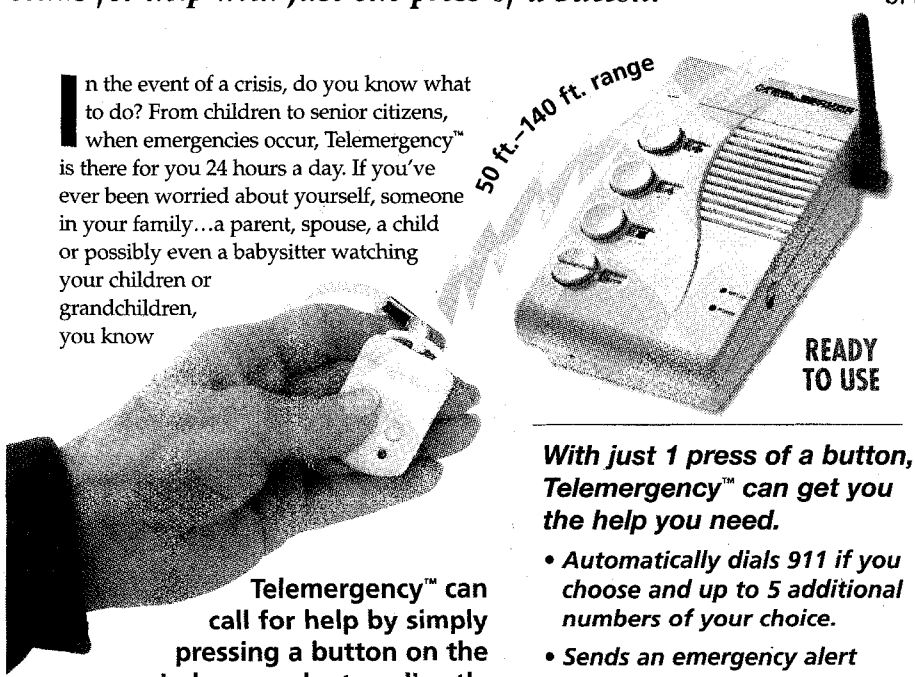


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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

# My Life as a Rabbi

Inviting me to a recent wedding in Virginia, the proud parents asked if I would do some sort of officiation. It would be my second turn in this role, having acted as priest/judge at a rural splicing here in the Northern California backwoods some years ago. On that occasion I wrote up a laicized version of the wedding ritual in the sixteenth-century *Book of Common Prayer*, shorn, naturally, of the bit about her obeying him. Then the couple nipped into a back room, where there was a real judge on hand to make it legal.

This time, beside a pond in a green field in rural Virginia, there was no judge, but none was necessary, since the couple had already eloped back in January, getting married on the bus the bridegroom's film collective uses on its cinematic ventures.

Why, you ask, would anyone ask a raffish antinomian of 1960s vintage to preside at any ceremony beyond the increasingly familiar one of throwing the ashes of some deceased lefty comrade over the back of a boat or off the top of a mountain? Maybe it's all those years on the road giving booster talks to radical groups, raising money for all the good causes. I've learned how to look a crowd in the eye, speak as though I mean it and not mumble.

The male guests at the affair in rural Virginia were all in black tie and dinner jacket. It had been years since I put on a tuxedo but I found one in an old trunk, given to me by the daughter of a British diplomat. I'd kept it for possible use at Halloween. Taking it to the cleaners I noticed that the poor fellow, an ambassador, had spent so many years resting his wrists on the table at a thousand dreary official dinners, mumbling "fascinating" at the anecdotes of his neighbors, that the cloth on the buttons of his jacket cuffs had entirely worn away.

As officiator I reckoned I ought to distinguish myself from the common herd of tux wearers, and so I threw around my neck a white silk scarf with a Japanese motif picked out on it in crimson thread. Later my old friend Seymour Hersh came up to me and said he'd arrived a bit late, hurried down to the pond and said to his wife, Liz, as they craned to observe the ceremony, "Now I've seen everything. Alex has become a rabbi."

My officiation went smoothly. I kept my remarks brief, imparting to the crowd the news that the couple were already married and had demonstrated their progressive commitment by getting spliced on an instrument of mass transit, which was also a temple of the arts. I stuck in words like "witness," "solemnize" (a prissy word, I know; I wanted to say "comedify" but thought it too tricksy) and "celebration" to lend a tinge of formality to the event. Then I yielded the floor, or rather the pond-side, to the couple, who spoke to each other, and the crowd, with glorious feeling and eloquence about their love for each other.

No stumblings here! Their professions of love had the grace of an aria in Mozart. If the younger crowd can talk like that, I'll stop wailing about the grossness of hip-hop.

I kept the scarf on amid the drinking and eating that followed, and was amazed at how many people concluded that I must somehow be, in a manner as yet undivulged to them, a man of the cloth. It shows that people feel no formal event is complete without a shaman of some sort on the premises, and thus were prepared to regard me as a priest or rabbi, all other evidence and prior knowledge of my character notwithstanding.

So take this as a formal flaunting of my shingle as Officiator. Have scarf, will travel. I even have an Airstream as changing room, if my rig becomes more elaborate.

I also offer my services as elegist at funerals or wakes too, though unlike many leftists I dislike cremations. Radicals tend to like incineration of the deceased and subsequent dispersal of ashes in romantic surroundings because it's good resource management, with the phoenix motif as a bonus. Being Anglo-Irish, I regard cremations as pagan beastliness and believe in coffins lowered with dignity into the dirt.

Crypts are OK too. One Anglo-Irish old neighbor from West Waterford left directions that he was to be buried in the family crypt, with a key to it in his pocket and a bottle of brandy by the coffin (lid not nailed down, naturally), cork loosened. He hailed from an earlier generation, brought up at the knee of Victorians, who lived in terror of premature burial. My Aunt Joan was like that too. "When you deem me to have expired," she would say to Dr. Galvin in her deep voice, at the age of 87, "cut deep into my wrists, to be completely sure."

Flushed with satisfaction at the proceedings in Virginia, I repaired a few days later to a green hillside above Santa Cruz, California, where a friend was graduating from Kresge College, UCSC. Now, UCSC's founding moment was back in the 1960s, amid high professions of hope that this could be a sanctuary, amid the redwood groves of the old Cowell ranch, of medium-to-higher learning designedly athwart convention. Kresge in particular was designed to be communal, antinomian even.

Nearly half a century later one would have to say that convention appears to have triumphed utterly. Up there, on the beautiful greensward, shimmering Pacific to the west and the blue arc of heaven above, there was scarcely a black face in the crowd and, most definitely, there wasn't a shaman in the house.

Another old friend, Conn Hallinan, now provost of Kresge, did not permit his radical lineage to intrude in any way on a torrent of benign platitudes. The keynote speaker, Carolyn Martin Shaw, a professor of anthropology at Kresge, was deprecating about Kresge's early years, but not in a way that permitted useful reflection. Not a tincture of politics, of history, of inspiration uplifted her humdrum observations. I'm not saying that all graduation addresses have be plump with homilies about duties incumbent on graduating youth amid all the corruptions of empire. But one does expect something, beyond what my father's tutor told him as he departed Oxford: "Well, Cockburn, hitherto your life has been criss-crossed with terms, exams and holidays. Now, it's pretty much a straight run to the grave." Surely the pioneers of UCSC would have hoped for more uplift than that. ■

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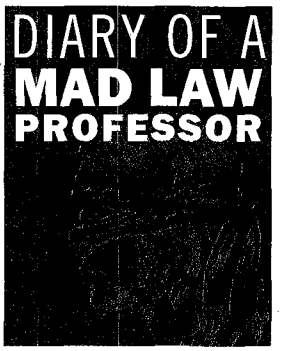
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

# First Chronicles




With street fighting prevailing, Paul Bremer, the American administrator in Iraq, recently trotted out a new "two-sided approach," according to the *New York Times*. US soldiers are now "combining military raids against suspected supporters of Saddam Hussein with high-visibility relief projects for Iraqi civilians." They call it carrot and stick, but it sounds awfully like the kind of abusive marriage where he roughs her up then shows up at the hospital with flowers. Even American soldiers have acknowledged the contradiction. "You bomb them, and three roads over you're fixing the school," said one soldier whose unit was pelted with rocks, glass, apples. A director of another school felt that Americans should be maintaining order rather than repairing schools. The repair process itself sounds as though it is being conducted like an invasion. News accounts describe soldiers surrounding schools and cordoning them off while the fixer-uppers go in to dispense blackboards and other symbolic favors. One NPR report focused on the community's distrust when the soldiers visited a school for autistic children as a good-will gesture. Imagine—and we must try to imagine, if for no other reason than to anticipate the consequences of our actions—how Iraqis must feel when autistic children, by definition sensitive to particular kinds of stress and traumatized further by the chaos of war, are visited by the same soldiers who might have killed their fathers or brothers or cousins the week before. Yes, war is hell, but this seems a tyrannical species of kindness. If I recall, it was misbegotten gestures like this that helped trigger the deep and ultimately destabilizing resentment in Somalia—soldiers were trying to wage war while playing Santa Claus (forgetting that Santa is at root a Christian icon).

And so we pursue the kind of psychology that lends insight into what kind of childhood Donald Rumsfeld must have endured: We are "breaking down" Iraqi prisoners by subjecting them to endless hours of the Barney theme song, while "cheering up" Iraqi children with real live GI Joes.

The double-edged approach to Iraqi reconstruction seems premised on the kinds of theories that prod pigeons and lab rats to obedience—over time, they learn how to tap this little button to get food and how not to tap that other little button, the one that zaps them with a brain-reordering electrical charge. But behavior modification works only in the most limited term and best when the subject is caged. In any event, *simultaneously* zapping and feeding creatures with even the smallest nub of a brain only demonstrates that biting the hand that feeds you can be rendered an autonomic response.

It is thus not surprising that our military's random acts of kindness have been met with widespread suspicion. The suspicion has snowballed into a fear among Iraqis that Americans are going to corrupt local women—although from all accounts, the military has tried hard, and apparently generally succeeded, in keeping soldiers away from, or even from looking at, Iraqi women. So whatever is going on is not what we, in our *Baywatch*-suffused society, would think of as violative in the knock-'em-up sense. Certainly it may have to do with the house-to-house, body-to-body search for weapons being conducted. And certainly there were reports in the first days of the occupation that soldiers were bringing in a range of steamy men's magazines, to the distress of the locals. Perhaps, too, it has to do with the effusive and much-publicized letter sent by one soldier to the largely female staff of the Iraqi Media Network, a television station guarded by the Third Infantry Division. With grand, Jeffersonian condescension, he wrote: "You are family to me, and will be missed very much. A lot of people would say, they are just Iraqis. I would say, they are my Iraqis."

But I suspect the greater, more obvious source of resentment is that we just might be seen as picking off quite a few more Iraqi men than we are taking account of, and, if wars since biblical times are any kind of precedent, that often translates into a sense of social vulnerability about the fate of women. Officials continue to say that it is impossible to know how many Iraqi combatants have died. And despite Bush's having declared the hostilities at an end, fighting has "unexpectedly continued" or "exceeded expectations" or "persisted in pockets" or "flared more than anticipated" or "resulted in unforeseen skirmishes." Americans are being killed at a rate, it seems, of around one a day now, with Iraqi deaths anywhere from two to twenty times that, according to individual news stories. But there is no official word as to how many Iraqi combatants have died overall—how many, in sum, of those who are variously described as "Sunni henchmen" or "regime sympathizers" or "Baathist loyalists" or "remnants" or "holdouts" or "fedayeen" or "thugs" or "protesters" or "looters" or "criminal elements" or "warlords" or "tribal resisters" or "fundamentalists" or "rogue agitators" or "unknown saboteurs." But when you put all those labels together, they might possibly indicate an ongoing war with quite a broad spectrum of Iraqi society. If so—and I'm not saying it is so, just asking the questions good citizens must—then this darkens the likelihood of seeing that country stable anytime soon.

In my humble opinion, it is not only the intelligence regarding purported weapons of mass destruction that must be questioned, it is the supposed intelligence that we would be welcomed as liberators, cleaved unto like lovers. If the highly anticipated dancing in the streets is only to be found among American oil contractors, Iraq is doomed for years of strife before any of the Administration's stated objectives can be realized: It will not be safe, it will not be free and it will certainly not be good for business. Indeed, if the war that was justified as "pre-emptive" against Saddam's suppression of his own people has in fact degenerated into myriad American "forays" justified as "self-defense" against those very people, then the supposed moral foundation of our presence there is not only double-edged, it is triply cursed. ■

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ARTICLES

# OTHER JAPANESE OCCUPATION

by JOHN W. DOWER

As we enter a dramatically altered world, both internationally and domestically, it is only natural that we look to history for bearings, points of comparison, glimmerings of the familiar. In these predictable uses of the past, "Japan" has emerged as a small trope for both horror and hope. Thus, September 11 became our generation's Pearl Harbor (headline writers across America turned, almost instinctively, to "Day of Infamy!"). Our new enemies have been declared an "axis of evil" (with North Korea presumably replacing the Japan of the 1930s). And now we have the sanguine scenario of the democratization of "occupied Japan" after World War II as a model for post-hostilities Iraq.

None of those analogies withstand serious scrutiny, and looking back at occupied Japan should really remind us both how fundamentally different Iraq is from the Japan of 1945 and also how far the United States itself has departed from the ideals of a half-century ago. Liberalism, internationalism, serious commitment to human rights, a vision of economic democratization in which the state is assigned an important role—these were watchwords of the Americans who formulated initial policy for occupied Japan. In the Bush Administration, they are objects of derision.

There are, in any case, several other midcentury Asian occupations that may deserve closer analysis when evaluating US policy today. Two of these—in Okinawa and South Korea—were conducted under the same American "supreme command" that presided over the occupation of Japan proper. A third, surely the most suggestive and provocative, is the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, which began in 1931 and soon extended to China south of the Great Wall and eventually to Southeast Asia.

Okinawa and South Korea are instructive as reminders that where security concerns were paramount from the start, the United States turned its back on serious "democratization" of the sort initially introduced to the greater part of Japan. Coveted by military strategists as a great stationary aircraft carrier off the coast of Asia, Okinawa, Japan's southernmost prefecture, was immediately turned into a huge US military installation. Although the occupation of Japan formally ended in April 1952, Okinawa remained a US colony until the early 1970s, when sovereignty was returned to Japan. The sprawling, grotesque complex of US bases remains.

In South Korea, as in the northern half of that tragically divided country, autocratic rule followed ostensible liberation from Japanese colonialism in 1945. Stability and anti-Communism were the bedrock of US occupation and postoccupation policy, and it took decades before the people of South Korea themselves succeeded in throwing off America's client regimes and establishing a more democratic society.

It is the almost forgotten interlude of Japan as an occupying power in Manchuria and later China, however, that poses the most intriguing analogy to the creation of a new American imperium today. Obviously, there are enormous differences between the two cases. Imperial Japan was not a hyperpower when it launched its campaign of accelerated empire-building in 1931. Its propagandists did not spout the rhetoric of democratization, privatization and free markets that fills the air today. Domestically, Japan operated under the aegis of a real emperor, rather than behind the shield of an imperial presidency.

Still, the points of resonance between the abortive Japanese empire and the burgeoning American one are striking. In both instances, we confront empire-building embedded in a larger agenda of right-wing radicalism. And in each, we find aggressive and essentially unilateral international policies wedded to a sweeping transformation of domestic priorities and practices.

Scholars are only now beginning to appreciate fully how per-

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versely "modern" imperial Japan's mobilization for war and accelerated expansion actually was. Self-styled patriotic renovationists not only seized the initiative in calling for a "new order" abroad and "new structure" at home but also made it clear that these goals were inseparable. Their exhortations were bold and articulate. They did not hesitate to employ subterfuge, intimidation and *fait accompli* to achieve their ends. They forged potent alliances of corporate, bureaucratic and political interests while vesting unprecedented power in the military. And they mobilized popular support domestically through masterful manipulation of a newly emergent mass media.

In retrospect, we tend to dwell on the hubris and madness of these men. Their short-lived empire is dismissed as little more than a "dream within a dream," to borrow a Japanese phrase, but this is too simple. In their passing moment of devastating triumph, these right-wing radicals not only changed the face of Asia in unanticipated ways but also permanently transformed Japan. And their great concerns, aspirations and accomplishments find eerie echo in much of what we behold in US policy today. Regime change, nation-building, creation of client states, control of strategic resources, defiance of international criticism, mobilization for "total war," clash-of-civilizations rhetoric, winning hearts and minds, combating terror at home as well as abroad—all these were part and parcel of Japan's vainglorious attempt to create a new order of "coexistence and co-prosperity" in Asia.

It is testimony to the peculiar power of the silver screen that Bernardo Bertolucci's 1987 epic *The Last Emperor*, winner of an impressive nine Academy Awards, managed to fascinate moviegoers without restoring the Japanese quest for hegemony on the Asian continent to popular memory. The new stage of empire in Asia began in 1931 when Japan, which had long exercised neocolonial control over Manchuria in collaboration with local warlords, seized the region in the wake of a bogus *casus belli*. (Elements in Japan's Kwantung Army blew up railway tracks controlled by the Japanese near Mukden and blamed indigenous forces.) The following year, the puppet state of "Manchukuo" was established under the regency of Pu Yi, the "last emperor" of the Manchu dynasty, which ruled China from 1643 until 1912. In 1933 Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in response to condemnation of its defiant unilateralism.

This exercise in what we now euphemistically refer to as regime change was subsequently extended to China south of the Great Wall, where the eruption of all-out war in 1937 left Japan in control of the entire eastern seaboard and a population of some 200 million Chinese. In 1941, bogged down in China and desperate for additional strategic resources, the imperial war machine advanced into the colonial enclaves of Southeast Asia (French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, America's Philippines colony and Great Britain's Hong Kong, Malaya and Burma). The attack on Pearl Harbor was in today's terminology a pre-emptive strike aimed at delaying America's response to this so-called liberation of Asia.

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*John W. Dower teaches at MIT. His most recent book,* Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II *(New Press), was honored with numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award and the Bancroft Prize.*

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"Liberation" was the consistent byword of Japan's advances—liberation from warlords, guerrillas, "bandits" and generalized chaos in Manchuria and China proper; liberation from the uncertainty and rapacity of the global capitalist system in the wake of the Great Depression; liberation from the "Red Peril" of Soviet-led international Communism and the "White Peril" of European and American colonialism. In the grandest of ideological formulations, Japanese propagandists evoked the image of a decisive clash between "East" and "West"—manichean hooey as seductive then as it is today.

While the takeover of Manchuria initially produced deep anxiety in Japan, this was soon dispelled by a great wave of patriotic solidarity. ("A hundred million hearts beating as one" was the analogue to today's "united we stand.") Propagandists evoked the same rhetoric of mission and Manifest Destiny that had animated European and US expansionists. They even appropriated the language of America's Monroe Doctrine by defending the seizure of Manchuria as part of creating a new "Monroe sphere in Asia." It was acknowledged that control of Manchuria would guarantee access to strategic raw materials (notably iron and coal), but the greater objective was, of course, peace and prosperity. The establishment of Manchukuo, it was declared, would bring about an unprecedented "harmony of the five races" (Japanese, Chinese, Manchus, Mongolians and Koreans). Beyond this, and of far greater significance, Manchukuo was envisioned as a perfect pilot project for establishing a political economy consistent with the most basic ideals of the radical right-wing agenda.

*Japanese propagandists evoked the image of a clash between 'East' and 'West'—manichean hooey as seductive then as it is today.*

The evocative catchphrase of those heady days was "Manchuria as ideology," and the ideology embraced was on the surface very different from that trumpeted by the hard-core ideologues of a new American empire today. In the wake of the Depression, which had savaged Japan as it had the rest of the world, the very notion of "free markets" and unrestrained capitalism was, to put it mildly, unpalatable. In this milieu, Manchukuo was seized upon as an ideal opportunity to introduce a new model of "state capitalism" or "national socialism."

Even this great difference, however, does not diminish the many points of similarity between the Japanese and the American cases. As always, the devil is in the details, and the most interesting details concern the manner in which adoption of a positive policy abroad was accompanied by a sweeping reordering of the domestic political economy. As in the United States today, governing circles in imperial Japan were riddled with factionalism. Out of these internecine struggles, elements associated with the military emerged as dominant, led by the "Control Faction" (*Tosei-ha*), associated with General and later Prime Minister Tojo Hideki.

The Control Faction's name had a dual origin. It implied controlling other factions, including more hotheaded rightists. More important, it signaled a dedication to harnessing the economy, and society as a whole, to the ultimate objective of creating a capacity to wage "total war." The "total war" concept had captured the imagination of military planners since World War I. The "Manchurian incident" of 1931 made it possible to put these plans into effect.

Politically, mobilization for total war entailed military domination of domestic as well as international policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs—Japan's counterpart to our State Department—was shouldered aside. Economic ministries and agencies became handmaidens to military demands. The Home Ministry—roughly comparable to the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security—intensified its role in domestic policing and the suppression of "dangerous thoughts." (The 1930s also witnessed a number of home-grown terrorist incidents in Japan, involving assassinations of prominent figures and, in 1936, a major attempted coup d'état.) The elective Diet or parliament became a rubber stamp. Communists and leftists in great numbers publicly recanted their criticism of the imperial state and declared themselves to be devoted to bringing about "revolution under the brocade banner" of the emperor. The mass media, hamstrung by formal censorship, also practiced self-censorship. Once the war machine had been put in motion, and a "blood debt" to the war dead established, it was inconceivable not to support the emperor's loyal troops.

Economically, mobilization for total war was particularly striking in its modernity—a notion that overturns the once-fashionable argument that backwardness and "feudal legacies" precipitated Japan's drive for control of Asia. The national budget was tilted overwhelmingly toward military-related expenditures. The decade after the seizure of Manchuria witnessed what academics now refer to as Japan's "second industrial revolution," marked by the takeoff of heavy and chemical industries. A massive wave of mergers took place, not only in the industrial and financial sectors but in the mass media as well.

Before the 1930s, the modern Japanese economy was dominated by four huge zaibatsu, or conglomerate-type business combines (Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo and Yasuda). After the takeover of Manchuria, the "big four" became major suppliers of the military, major beneficiaries of development projects in occupied areas, major actors in the suppression of a nascent labor union movement and major contributors to the consolidation of a domestic "dual structure" characterized by increasing disparities of wealth and power.

At the same time, the 1930s also witnessed the emergence of a technologically innovative corporate sector known as the "new zaibatsu" (*shinko zaibatsu*), which was primarily devoted to military contracting and empire-building. Like the big four—and like the cutting-edge US corporations clamoring to get in on the gravy train of today's "war on terror"—these new zaibatsu worked hand in glove with the military and cultivated what we now call crony capitalism. By war's end, the six largest new zaibatsu (Asano, Furukawa, Nissan, Okura, Nomura and Nakajima) accounted for more than 16 percent of paid-in capital in mining, chemical and heavy industries, while the share of the big four had increased to more than 32 percent. When all was said and done, "national socialism" proved very hospitable to aggressive privatization.

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Within the civilian ministries, the counterpart to the military hawks and innovative new zaibatsu was a loosely linked cadre known as the "new bureaucrats" (*shin kanryo*) or "renovationist bureaucrats" (*kakushin kanryo*)—accomplished technocrats devoted to wedding the new order abroad to new institutional structures at home. Adversaries and factional opponents may have denounced these men as rogue bureaucrats—or rogue capitalists, or rogue military—but the rogues were in the saddle.

Although we speak of a military takeover of Japan in the 1930s, electoral politics and most functions of civil society continued through war into the postwar era. Tojo himself was eased from power, in proper parliamentary manner, in 1944. No one could stop the machine he and his fellow right-wing radicals had set in motion, however, until the war came home, culminating in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan's was a short ride as empires go, but the devastation left in its wake was enormous.

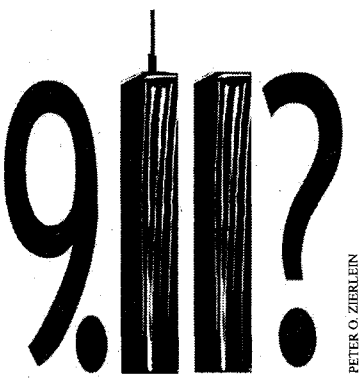
Despite the deepening quagmire of occupation and empire, Japanese leaders and followers alike soldiered on—driven by patriotic ardor and a pitiful fatalism. It was only afterward, in the wake of defeat, that pundits and politicians and ordinary people stepped back to ask: How could we have been so deceived?

We are in a better position to answer this now. ■

A BIPARTISAN COMMISSION IS AT WORK, BUT HOW TOUGH IT WILL BE IS STILL UNKNOWN.

# Probing 9/11

**DAVID CORN**




PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Bruce DeCell was sitting at the far end of the third row in a Senate hearing room. He held a photograph of a smiling man in formal attire so the important people on the dais before him could see it. Next to the image was a name: Mark Petrocelli. A caption read, TOWER I—92ND FLOOR. WE LOVE YOU. WE MISS YOU. Petrocelli was his 28-year-old son-in-law. He had worked for a commodities firm across the street from the World Trade Center. Days before September 11, he had been promoted from phone clerk to trader and was in Tower One that morning for his first meeting as a broker.

DeCell, a 53-year-old retired New York City cop who lives on Staten Island, was grim-faced as he watched—or witnessed—the second round of public hearings held by the independent 9/11 Commission, created by Congress to investigate what happened before and on that awful day. While Democrats and Republicans in Congress have been squabbling over whether to investigate the missing (so far) weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the 9/11 Commission has been getting on with its work. On this day in May, Bogdan Dzakovic, an aviation security expert and whistleblower, was testifying before the ten commissioners about airline security problems that existed on September 11—and continue. These weaknesses, he said, have often gone unfixed because federal authorities cave in to pressure from the airline industry. While Dzakovic spoke—"It's only a matter of time before terrorists figure out [the new security arrangements] and blow up fifty planes in one day"—DeCell had a thousand-mile stare, but he was intently listening. "If I did anything like this as a policeman," he muttered, "and killed 3,000 people, with this much evidence against me, I'd spend 100,000 years in jail."

DeCell wasn't just speaking about airline security screw-ups that permitted nineteen people to hijack four airliners and turn three of them into deadly weapons. He meant everything that had gone wrong on and before September 11. Bad intelligence. Inadequate law enforcement. Lousy immigration procedures. Insufficient air defense preparation. Poor emergency planning. After the attacks, there was no wholesale examination of all that, almost no responsibility assessed for mistakes. And there has been no government-wide review to determine whether post-9/11 changes in policies and procedures have been effective. The House and Senate intelligence committees did conduct a joint inquiry that examined the intelligence failures of 9/11, but the investigation's final report has been bottled up for months, with the Administration battling to keep parts of it classified. The 9/11 Commission's mission is to go beyond the joint inquiry, compile the authoritative account of 9/11 and issue recommendations that will help the nation avert a future catastrophe.

Six months after its birth, it is unclear whether this bipartisan commission is on a path to success. Washington is littered with the remains of blue-ribbon panels that were more bust than blast. This commission could be overwhelmed by its task. It could end up thwarted by an Administration more eager to stonewall than to share information. And its independence has been questioned. But it does have fifty staff members digging away and exploring various 9/11 questions. Perhaps it will be a rare exception: a Washington commission willing to confront Washington.

The commission's takeoff was not smooth. This past November, George W. Bush, who opposed the creation of the commission until he got the right to name its chairman, appointed Henry Kissinger. Under fire for refusing to reveal the clients of his consulting firm, Kissinger quit two weeks later. Bush then selected former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean, a Republican with a reputation as a moderate but no obvious experience in national security matters. Congressional Democrats chose as co-chairman former Representative Lee Hamilton, who had chaired the House Intelligence Committee and the joint Iran/*contra* committee. The four other Democrats on the commission are lawyer Richard Ben-Veniste, former Senator Max Cleland, former Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick and former Representative Tim Roe-

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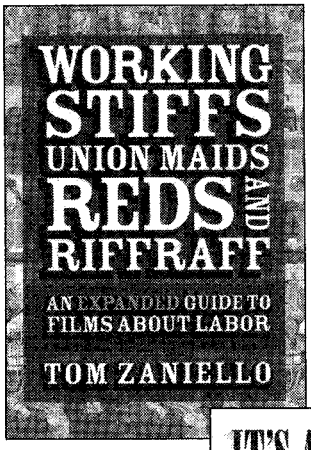


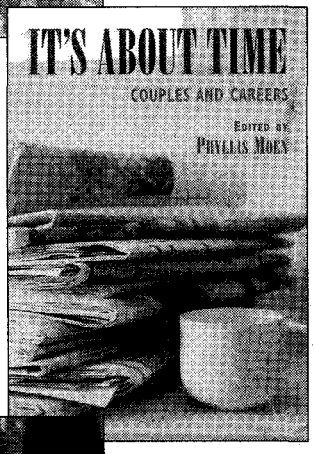


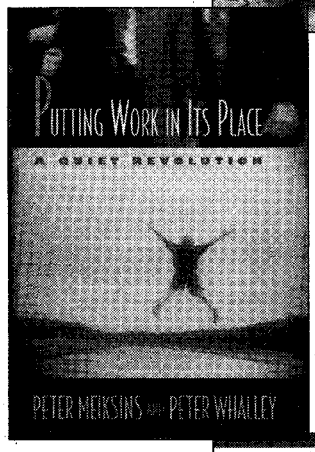


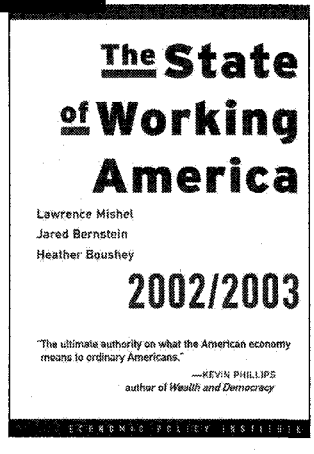


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mer, who led the fight for the commission. The Republicans are former Senator Slade Gorton, former Navy Secretary John Lehrman, former Illinois Governor James Thompson and lawyer Fred Fielding—most recently in the news for being accused of having been "Deep Throat" during Watergate. It's a pretty typical composition for a Washington commission—mostly established and accomplished players, not mavericks, and several with strong ties to the current or previous Administrations—the targets, in a sense, of the commission. "It's been a problem throughout to get commissioners and staff who are truly independent," says Stephen Push, a co-founder of Families of September 11. And three of the commissioners—Ben-Veniste, Gorelick and Thompson—have had to recuse themselves from matters involving commercial aviation security because they are associated with law firms that represent airlines. "This is what happens when you pick talented people with expertise in Washington," says one commission source. "Do you want people who have no experience at all?"

*'This has not been a speedy locomotive, but a spitting, coughing automobile.'*
*—commission member Tim Roemer*

The commission was nearly two months old before it had an executive director, and the person hired for the post—Philip Zelikow—symbolized the difficulty of assembling an independent outfit. Zelikow, an accomplished historian, worked with Bush National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice in the National Security Council during the first Bush Administration. The two then collaborated on a book. And in October 2001, Bush appointed Zelikow to his Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, a group of prominent citizens who offer advice on intelligence topics and occasionally investigate controversies. "Philip is a certified Republican but not an ideologue," says a longtime colleague who is a Democrat.

Zelikow will be guiding an investigation that presumably will scrutinize the actions of Rice, his friend and co-author. And given the Administration's penchant for secrecy, it's reasonable to assume that the commission will sooner or later clash with the White House over access to secret information, perhaps the records of Rice's NSC. The White House, for instance, has previously refused to disclose information on at least two key briefings that Bush and his national security aides received before 9/11. Can Zelikow, a Bush I and Bush II appointee, go toe to toe with his former colleague if a battle ensues? "It concerns me," says one commission official. "Rice is one of the key people we need to independently evaluate and talk to." And Push remarks, "I'm not crazy that Philip Zelikow has such a close relationship to Rice and other people the commission is investigating."

Zelikow concedes that he has to prove his independence. He notes that he was retained at the initiative of the commission's Democrats, who were fully aware of his past. "My job," he says, "is to get the information. The commission has a heavy burden of demonstrating to a lot of suspicious and cynical people that we can get the information we need. We know that."

It took several months for the commission to rev up. Funding issues had to be resolved. More important, there was an early tussle over access to information. When Roemer, who had served on the Congressional 9/11 joint inquiry, tried to review records of that investigation, he was told he could not see the material until the Administration had vetted it. Since the commission was supposed to build upon the work of the joint inquiry, this procedure—agreed to by the commission's leadership—seemed at best an unnecessary impediment and, at worse, an Administration attempt to control part of the commission's work. After Roemer complained, commissioners and their staff were granted full access—as long as they were willing to trek to a secured office in a House annex. "There was no question we were off to a slow start," Roemer says. "This has not been a speedy locomotive, but a spitting, coughing automobile."

Speed is important. The law establishing the commission granted it only eighteen months of life, and the clock began ticking on December 2. It now has less than a year to conduct its investigation and write its final report. The staff has been divided into nine investigative teams that have begun exploring nine separate areas: Al Qaeda and terrorism, the intelligence community, US counterterrorism policy, terrorist financing, border control and terrorist watch lists, domestic law enforcement and intelligence, aviation and transportation security, the emergency responses to the attacks, and the White House's and federal government's reactions to the strikes.

Several of these topics on their own could occupy a single commission for a year. Within these nine domains, the 9/11 Commission has to examine why fighter jets didn't scramble sooner on 9/11, what the Bush and Clinton administrations were told about threats from Osama bin Laden and how they responded, whether Congressional oversight of the spy services has been adequate, how the 9/11 murderers were financed, why the CIA failed to place two of the 9/11 hijackers on a terrorist watch list, whether the airlines place profits ahead of security precautions, whether a suspicious pattern of stock transactions occurred before the attacks. And that's only a partial list. Then the commission is supposed to consider how to better protect the country. Is the Department of Homeland Security working out? Has the FBI gotten its counterterrorism act together? Are the computers finally up to par at the INS? Is the government ready for the next attack?

While the investigators are investigating, the commission has held two rounds of hearings. In addition to providing a forum for gut-wrenching statements from relatives of the 9/11 dead, these sessions produced valuable testimony about issues the commission has to address. Senator Joseph Lieberman, a presidential candidate who, with Senator John McCain, sponsored the legislation that created the commission, testified that "too many of the failures we have already identified are unchanged to this day, a full twenty months after the attacks." McCain blasted "excessive Administration secrecy on issues related to the September 11th attacks."

The hearings provided further cause to believe airlines have sacrificed security for revenue—and may still be doing so. Michael Canavan, a former Federal Aviation Administration security chief, noted, "We were under intense pressure from the industry." The airlines, he added, would pile up huge fines for security

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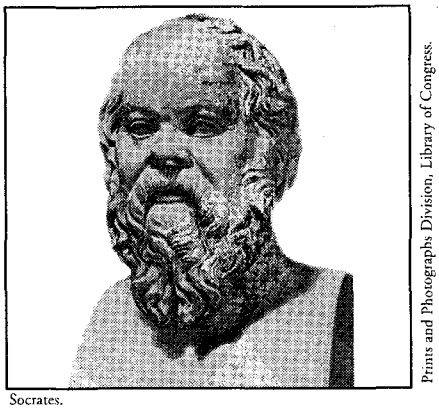

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violations, and then their lawyers would negotiate lower settlements. Transportation Department Inspector General Kenneth Mead testified that "cost-benefit analysis" has often played too large a role in the consideration of security measures, and said that security involving cruise ships and cargo on passenger flights remains poor.

The hearings and the commission's work have not received extensive media notice, which is odd, since the panel is seeking to explain the most traumatic moment in recent US history. The *New York Times* did not cover the commission's last set of hearings, nor did most cable and network news shows. But "the families" and a handful of others are closely watching the commission, which, to its credit, has been attentive to the suggestions and concerns of the relatives.

There is much wreckage for the commission to sift through. Will the Administration cooperate fully? The White House fight with the joint inquiry over the release of its final report is not encouraging. "I have some concerns about how committed the Administration is to seeing this through," says Push. "Three thousand people died—you can't play games." But by responding slowly or uncooperatively to information requests from the commission, Administration officials or bureaucrats can gum up the works rather easily. "Agencies are very much cognizant of how much time is left for the commission," says an investigator who worked on the joint inquiry. And Roemer comments, "The independent commission needs to make very clear, you cannot abuse or overuse the classification issue to keep potentially embarrassing information from reaching the sunlight." But that is what the Bush Administration has done in other instances.

Both Kean and Hamilton say they will do what is necessary to pry sensitive information from the government. "I spent a good part of my life trying to get information into the public record," Hamilton remarked after the May hearings. "I'm not going to reverse course now." Less reassuring was Kean's confession that he had not yet read the joint inquiry's final report. Both men acknowledged that the task ahead is massive. "The question on my mind," Hamilton said, "is, How do we get our hands around this?"

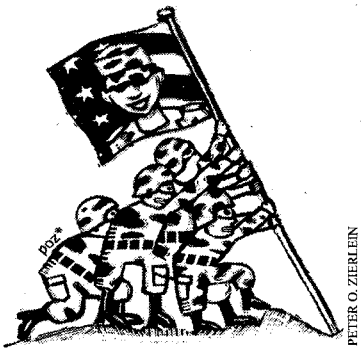
After watching the commission's hearing, DeCell noted that he was "impressed with the sincerity" of its members. Still, he feared they were on the short end of long odds. "The Administration," he says, "and most politicians, really don't want to get to the bottom of it, because they're all implicated in some way, in too many different areas, for too many years." Moments later, Kean, speaking about the committee's as yet unimpressive progress, said, "Please be patient." DeCell said he was willing to wait—as long as his wait ends with answers and accountability. ■

THE PENTAGON WAS SELLING A PATRIOTIC TALE. IT FOUND MANY EAGER BUYERS.

# The Press and Private Lynch

**DAPHNE EVIATAR**

In the wee hours of April 2, Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks summoned reporters from their hotel rooms in Doha, Qatar, for a special press briefing at the Coalition Media Center. "Coalition forces have conducted a successful rescue mission of a US Army prisoner of war held captive in Iraq," the Central Command spokesperson told reporters. "The soldier has been returned to a coalition-controlled area."



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

That was about all that was said initially about the rescue of 19-year-old POW Jessica Lynch. Since the opening of the war, the Central Command briefings had given reporters almost nothing, and at first it seemed this story would be more of the same. At the next morning's regular press briefing, military officials didn't even bring it up. But as if on cue, CNN correspondent Tom Mintier, the first reporter called on, piped up: "General Brooks, we noticed that you made no mention of the rescue of Jessica Lynch and the special operations that went on. We understand that there is video taken by a combat camera team. Can you show us that video?"

With that, Brooks began to tell the story that would come to be known as Saving Private Lynch. Special ops had successfully retrieved Lynch, "bringing her away from that location of danger" and had withstood "firefights outside of the building, getting in and getting out.... At this point she is safe. She's been retrieved and some brave souls put their lives on the line to make this happen, loyal to a creed that they know that they will never leave a fallen comrade and never embarrass their country. The next question?"

Although Mintier and CNN refuse to discuss it, reporters in Doha at the time say the question seemed to have been prompted. "That was the scuttlebutt," says one reporter from a major American daily. "It certainly seemed part of the show."

If it was, it was staged perfectly. Within hours, news organizations blew up the few facts on offer into the story of a "daring raid" in "hostile territory." The *Los Angeles Times* reported that US Special Forces endured a "blaze of gunfire" at the hospital. The *New York Times*'s first story was cautious, but its second reported that "the rescue team took fire from buildings within the compound, but the troops fired back and quickly made their way into the hospital." On television, the Army's grainy footage of Lynch being carried out of the Iraqi hospital on a stretcher and whisked into a waiting Black Hawk helicopter was played over

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and over, and became an enduring image of the war. CNN reported that US forces had made a "forced entry into the hospital." On Fox, Lynch quickly became "America's hero."

For the US military, the story of Private Lynch arrived just in time. For days, all reporters covering the war had been able to give their editors was a slew of bad news. By the end of March, US forces had been stymied by unexpectedly fierce fighting in the south, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was facing harsh criticism for not having deployed sufficient ground troops to overcome the Iraqi resistance. US troops had just killed a van full of Iraqi women and children, and American forces had lost four Marines in a helicopter crash. The Lynch rescue was finally some good news. And it seemed to quickly get even better.

By the second day, the *Washington Post* was reporting that the West Virginia supply clerk who aspired to be a kindergarten teacher had fought back fiercely against her captors. In a front-page story, headlined "She Was Fighting to the Death," reporters Susan Schmidt and Vernon Loeb cited anonymous US officials as saying Lynch "fought fiercely and shot several enemy soldiers" after Iraqi soldiers ambushed her supply team, "firing her weapon until she ran out of ammunition." The story soon led television and radio broadcasts: On NBC, Forrest Sawyer reported that "Lynch continued firing at Iraqi troops even after she was wounded," while Robin Roberts on ABC's *Good Morning America* announced that Lynch "fought fiercely," "shooting several Iraqis" and "emptying her weapon before being stabbed and finally taken prisoner." Although they all credited the *Post*, none of the networks made any reference to the fact that the *Post* itself acknowledged it was citing "rumors."

*Not everyone followed the* Washington Post's *lead in reporting Lynch's 'fighting to the death.' Says one, 'It didn't pass the smell test.'*

Not all media were so quick to follow the *Post*'s lead. Says *Newsday*'s Craig Gordon, who was reporting from Doha, "It didn't pass the smell test. She's a 19-year-old supply clerk, and they made her sound like Rambo. I had no way to check it, and it didn't ring true." The *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Newsweek* also did not run stories about Lynch's heroic fight.

In truth, reporters covering the war were in a tough spot. Everyone interviewed for this story said it was impossible to confirm the Lynch story's details with anyone outside the government in those first days. "No reporters witnessed it," says Gordon. "It was frustrating." *New York Times* spokesman Toby Usnik said the paper "gave as full an account as possible." Paul Slavin, senior vice president of ABC News, says: "As with many stories, we were left with our sourcing being other government agencies. The whole war was characterized by reporting through straws. There were thirty tiny visions of what was going on on that battlefield at any time." Even reporters critical of the American coverage, such as Richard Lloyd Parry, who wrote one of the first stories about the rescue from the Iraqi doctors' perspective for the *Times* of London, says, "The telephones were down. American and Iraqi forces were still fighting over Nasiriyah. It would have been several days before anyone could make a sensible decision to go in there and check it out."

Still, many journalists say that news organizations should have acknowledged just how little they actually knew. The American news media "could have framed it in a way which distanced the source," notes Parry. "Which is what they did with all Iraqi sources. Why should we assume that what Donald Rumsfeld is saying is more reliable than what Iraqi sources are saying?" The *Post*'s Loeb says, "We had three sources that she was fighting back," for the April 3 story. "They told us what was in their intelligence reports." But that was three different government officials confirming the substance of the same reports.

By now, of course, it's become clear that the story that government officials told reporters of Lynch's capture and the "daring" rescue was far from accurate. She did not fire her weapon, and she was neither shot nor stabbed. And according to news reports since mid-April from the BBC, the *Times* of London, the Associated Press, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and others, Iraqi doctors at the hospital where Lynch was being treated report that Iraqi fighters had already abandoned the hospital and that hospital staff had even tried to return her to American forces well before the Special Forces swooped in. It was "like a Hollywood film," Dr. Harith al-Houssona, a physician at the hospital, told the BBC in a May 18 broadcast. "They shout, 'Go, go, go!', with guns and blanks... and the sound of explosions. They make a show...action moves like Sylvester Stallone or Jackie Chan...with jumping and shouting, breaking the door." And contrary to US reports that Lynch had been mistreated, hospital staff said they'd treated her as well as possible under wartime conditions.

To be sure, the reports from Nasiriya have conflicted as well. Keith Richburg of the *Washington Post* reported on April 14 that Iraqi doctors had told him the Iraqi military forces had fled the hospital on the morning of the Lynch raid, which suggests US forces might not have been sure they were gone. But by the time the BBC went to Nasiriya, witnesses told the network that special forces knew the Iraqi military had left the day before the rescue mission. But even if those facts remain unclear, there's little doubt that the US military offered up a version of the story that made Lynch and her rescuers look most heroic. "The American military obviously saw immediately what a great PR stunt this was. They played it for all it was worth," says Alan Hamilton, who co-wrote the London *Times*'s initial story on the Lynch rescue.

Why were the American media so easily misled?

Although reporters won't say their editors pressured them into blowing up the story, it was clear that good war news was selling better. Fox News, which kept an American flag on its screen throughout the war and adopted the military's propagandistic war slogan "Operation Iraqi Freedom" as its own official news banner, was drawing more viewers than any other cable news channel. Slavin notes that when ABC finally went back in May to report on how the rescue looked to the hospital staff, "we got hundreds of calls complaining that we were undercutting the military."

CNN, even ten days later, was still describing the story based purely on the military's version. In its recap of "The Rescue of Private Lynch," CNN took "a very personal look at a very brave young soldier." CNN anchor Anderson Cooper said with a straight face: "To many, Private Lynch, her daring rescue and her return

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have come to symbolize the qualities the US military holds highest: loyalty, endurance and daring."

Many American news organizations eventually made efforts to correct, or at least to flesh out, the Lynch rescue story. On April 14, Richburg reported the Iraqi doctors' view of the rescue in the *Post*. About a week later, the *New York Times*'s Alan Feuer did a similar story, and AP, CNN and some of the networks did follow-ups as well.

But until the *Washington Post* finally ran a major piece on June 17, in effect taking back much of its initial reporting, none of those stories got anywhere near the play the first ones did. Ed Cody, at the time the *Post*'s deputy foreign editor, originally brushed off suggestions that the *Post* ought not to have buried its first, limited follow-up story on A-17. "That's just the way things work," Cody said. "No one looked at that story and said, 'We had the dramatic rescue story on page one, shouldn't this be on page one too?'" Calls to *Post* editors involved in the June 17 story were not returned.

The fact is, Jessica Lynch as war hero sells. As the *New York Times* recently reported, the media giants have been fighting over an exclusive interview with Lynch since she arrived in a US military hospital; CBS has pitched her a stunning package of TV documentary, entertainment and book projects that would surely earn huge profits for the Viacom empire.

Almost thirty years ago Phillip Knightley chronicled in *The First Casualty* how journalists get duped into spreading the government's propaganda. At least during Vietnam, the media eventually grew skeptical. But in today's quick, high-tech wars, there's little time for the seeds of dissent to sprout, and the media seem eager to please a patriotic public. It's no coincidence that the name "Jessica Lynch" is much more recognizable in the United States than Ali Abbas, the 12-year-old Iraqi boy who lost both arms in the bombing of Baghdad, or even Lori Ann Piestewa, the first American female soldier killed in Iraq.

It's predictable that the war's architects would prefer that the public associate the war with the image of a valiant American heroine and the soldiers who risked their lives to save her. But it's disturbing that American media encourage it. While the BBC's story was a scathing indictment of the military's deliberate spin tactics—the BBC's John Kampfner called it "one of the most stunning pieces of news management ever conceived"—the American stories have generally been subdued. When *Los Angeles Times* columnist Robert Scheer criticized the Pentagon's spin job, he was roundly attacked as unpatriotic by Fox's Bill O'Reilly. The *New York Times* assigned its analysis of the inaccuracies of the original Lynch story to military favorite Mark Bowden, author of *Black Hawk Down*, whose prominent *Times* piece excused the military's spin as a normal part of "the fog of war," and the media's heroic embellishments as "what daily journalism does."

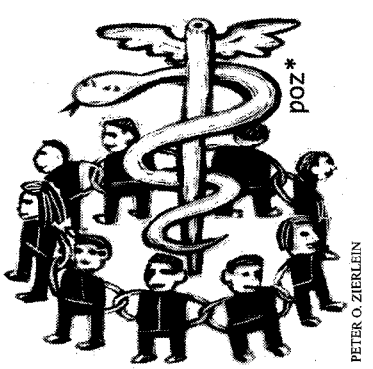
That lets American news organizations off the hook far too easily. And as the *Times* of London's Richard Lloyd Parry notes, it explains why the military spun the story so crudely in the first place. "Whatever further embarrassment and loss of credibility the coalition experiences now as a result of the truth coming out, the benefits they reaped at the time far surpass that. So on balance, from their point of view, they did the right thing." ■

WHILE FIGHTING GIVEBACKS, UNIONS CAN'T LOSE SIGHT OF THE BIG HEALTHCARE PICTURE.

# Labor's Health Problem

**STEVE EARLY**

When 3,000 General Electric factory workers and supporters held a contract rally outside GE's Lynn, Massachusetts, plant on June 7, one question preoccupied the crowd: Would there be another strike over healthcare?



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Back in January, these workers—members of Local 201 of the International Union of Electronic Workers–Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA)—walked out as part of a companywide protest against higher medical co-payments. GE, they found out, had made $15 billion in 2002, while its healthcare expenses had increased less than the national average. Yet management insisted that all employees pay a bigger share of the cost of their doctor visits, hospital stays, emergency-room care and prescription drugs.

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In a tentative agreement on a new four-year contract, announced June 15, GE unions were able to blunt the company's drive for further givebacks, averting a second work stoppage.

But in other workplaces across the nation, healthcare cost shifting continues unabated. Where workers have no union—and 87 percent do not—the burden of medical cost inflation is shifted from management to labor with little fuss for the former, regardless of the financial pain inflicted on the latter. In the unionized sector, industrial strife about health insurance is spreading. Since 2001, state employees in Minnesota, teachers in New Jersey, janitors in Massachusetts, candy makers in Pennsylvania, food processors in Wisconsin, uranium-plant workers in Kentucky, truck builders in Tennessee and aerospace workers in Texas have all experienced healthcare-related strikes or lockouts—and several are still going on. Later this summer, major contracts in the telephone and auto industries will be renegotiated. If management tries to reduce health coverage for the hundreds of thousands of workers and

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pensioners at General Motors, Chrysler, Ford or Verizon, even greater confrontations lie ahead.

How US unions respond to this challenge has important implications for the future of healthcare reform. The actions of organized labor—at the negotiating table or on the picket line—can become a rallying point for all Americans ill served by our current system of private, job-based medical benefits. When unionized workers resist benefit cuts in a way that projects the broader demand for healthcare for all, they help generate pressure for a political solution to the larger problem: how, as a nation, to create affordable health coverage. If, however, organized labor chooses piecemeal change and refuses to challenge the link between medical insurance and employment, it will miss the chance to connect with millions of poorly insured and uninsured workers who have no union.

*The actions of organized labor can become a rallying point for all Americans ill served by our system of job-based medical benefits.*

"We need a universal, comprehensive single-payer healthcare program to cover every man, woman and child in the United States," says new United Auto Workers president Ron Gettelfinger, who is pushing Detroit auto makers to support such a plan. "You can't fix the healthcare crisis in America at any one bargaining table, with any one employer, or within any one industry."

The last time labor had a similar historic opportunity to shape the healthcare reform debate, it made a promising start—and then blew it. In the late 1980s and early '90s, medical cost inflation was reaching double digits, just like today. Healthcare disputes were causing four out of every five strikes. In monumental battles like the Mine Workers' yearlong walkout at Pittston, unions that successfully resisted concessions did so by forming alliances with community groups and other unions seeking healthcare reform. Some AFL-CIO affiliates began to do systematic member education about why a tax-supported universal health system like Canada's would be better for workers than the current patchwork quilt of Medicare, Medicaid and myriad private plans. A number of big unions endorsed single-payer legislation, and through grassroots coalitions like Jobs With Justice, they demonstrated for fundamental change.

Just as this campaign was gaining momentum, the AFL-CIO abruptly switched course. The labor federation embraced Bill and Hillary Clinton's Health Security Act, an ill-fated scheme that preserved the role of private insurers and was so convoluted that few unions could even explain it to their members. The Clinton bill represented a step backward for labor, mirroring conservative mandated-benefits legislation developed by Richard Nixon in the 1970s to fend off universal coverage based on the model of Medicare. But by 1993, most unions and Democrats were nevertheless rallying around the bill, which sought to shore up a private, job-based benefits system. Like similar proposals in some states today, Clinton's approach—obligating employers to pay for a portion of their employees' health costs—was strikingly out of sync with work-force trends, notably the creation of millions of part-time, temporary and independent-contractor jobs with little or no health coverage. As Marie Gottschalk shows in her incisive study *The Shadow Welfare State: Labor, Business and the Politics of Health Care in the United States*, labor's willingness to settle for the Clinton bill reflected crackpot realism at its worst, for the whole "system of employment-based benefits... was crumbling just at the moment when organized labor sought an employer-mandate solution."

After the Clinton plan flopped, most firms offering health plans devised managed-care fixes of their own, which kept the system's "crumbling" from becoming a collapse—at least for a few years. But management-imposed limits on employees' choice of doctors, hospitals and treatment options are no longer restraining costs. Premium increases may reach 15 percent this year, and business wants workers to foot the bill. Private health insurance for 16 million retirees is a primary management target, particularly in troubled industries like steel, where companies blame such "legacy costs" for landing them in or near Chapter 11. Twenty-five years ago, more than 80 percent of all medium- and large-sized firms offered medical benefits to retirees. Now only 40 percent do. Successful union resistance to cost shifting in the past is thus no guarantee that the same group of workers won't face benefits cuts in the future—even when they retire from a profitable company. Fourteen years ago, a four-month telephone strike preserved fully paid health coverage for then-Nynex workers in the Northeast; now its successor firm, Verizon, wants to cap all retiree medical contributions in bargaining this year—affecting many veterans of the 1989 walkout.

The challenge facing unions today is how to broaden their defense of negotiated benefits, for active and retired workers, when a record number of Americans—as many as 75 million at one point during the past two years—have no coverage at all. If struggles against cost shifting are framed narrowly, they will be, in effect, just another special-interest fight against givebacks by workers who already enjoy above-average coverage. However, if resistance to cost shifting is framed in terms of the larger political demand of healthcare for all, these fights could attract much broader labor and community support.

When GE workers struck in January, for example, they saw the big picture. IUE-CWA Local 201 joined forces with Jobs With Justice, as well as senior groups, the state nurses' association and low-income organizations, to hold a community rally for healthcare reform. Speakers highlighted the medical coverage problems of everyone from immigrant workers to the self-employed to retirees who get bounced around from one collapsing Medicare HMO to another. Pat Lawrence, a member of the Lynn Health Care Task Force, told the crowd, "We're here to support the GE workers because you will bring attention to those who have no insurance—the elderly, the disadvantaged and the homeless—through your strikes and walkouts."

Engaging this broader public during benefit disputes requires a candid admission by labor that today's healthcare crisis can't be settled at the bargaining table. This is particularly true when a unionized work force is low-paid, part-time or transient, and lacking strike leverage. In Boston this past fall, despite major community support, a citywide strike by immigrant janitors began to weaken after a month. It ended unhappily for many workers because larger wage increases were sacrificed to pay

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for expanded medical coverage—a benefit that will apply to only 1,000 part-timers out of 8,000. Given the nature of building services and other low-wage sectors, it's doubtful that collective bargaining will ever be able to achieve the quality of job-based benefits once enjoyed in traditional bastions of union strength like manufacturing, utilities and construction.

In trucking and the building trades, there's an additional complication: Many union officials don't want to forsake job-based medical coverage—no mattered how tattered—because they're in the benefits business themselves. As Gottschalk notes in her account of how labor conservatives have impeded past efforts at comprehensive healthcare reform, over half of all union members are still insured through Taft-Hartley funds, jointly administered by labor and management. Such arrangements have long been defended as a way to promote union loyalty. Unfortunately, by aligning the interests of union officials and insurers, the Taft-Hartley funds give one wing of organized labor what Gottschalk calls "a vested interest in maintaining the status quo." It also leads to AFL-CIO pronouncements that appear to be a balancing act between single-payer advocates, at the grassroots, and union affiliates more inclined to partnerships with employers that would preserve and extend job-based coverage.

Such internal tensions produce labor-backed legislative proposals—now being pushed in about ten states—that are a very mixed bag. In Ohio, leading unions and the state labor federation are uniting with healthcare professionals and community groups to build the Single Payer Action Network, a coalition seeking a comprehensive solution to the state's healthcare crisis. In California, however, the AFL-CIO threw its weight behind a far less ambitious pay-or-play bill. This would require employers to offer their workers health insurance or pay into a state-operated pool that would provide alternative coverage. The problem with "pay or play," says Dan Hodges, chair of California's Health Care for All (HCA), is that it "creates a two-tiered system in which people covered through their jobs might have adequate benefits but those who get public coverage will receive an explicitly bare-bones package. Since those with the public package will more likely be people of color, the two-tiered system will have a racial character as well." HCA and the militant California Nurses Association support an alternative bill, which would establish universal, publicly funded coverage.

The finer points of such policy debates are lost on most union members. That's because unions tend to leave healthcare strategy and lobbying in the hands of experts. In contract talks, negotiators desperately seek new cost-containment schemes to sugarcoat medical plan changes. Meanwhile, labor policy wonks organize events like the current series of AFL-CIO Regional Health Care Conferences—open only to union reps and too narrowly focused on "recent best practice given the current climate." This top-down, technocratic approach fails to address the need for massive workplace education and debate about healthcare reform. Because that's been so neglected, most trade unionists still think of universal healthcare as something that would benefit someone else. The term "single payer" often draws blank stares [see David Corn, "Healthcare for All—Now," January 6]. And the concept of a government-run insurance plan strikes many union members as


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a formula for longer waits, inferior care and higher taxes—rather than real security and relief from out-of-pocket costs.

One group trying to change "the current climate" through rank-and-file education and cross-union activity is Jobs With Justice. On June 5 the group sponsored a statewide Health Care Action Day in Massachusetts, endorsed by more than fifty unions and community groups. Participating organizations distributed more than 65,000 stickers demanding "Health Care for All" and did the mobilization necessary to get workers—from nurses facing staffing cuts and state workers facing benefits givebacks to utility workers facing slashed retirement coverage—to wear them on the job. This workplace activity was accompanied by informational picketing and rallies calling for a healthcare system that "covers everyone, is publicly financed, and saves money...by reducing bureaucratic waste."

The most active participants were workers at GE and Verizon who have been—or may soon be—on strike over cost shifting. If 80,000 members of CWA and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) walk out in August at Verizon, this could lead to termination of their benefits coverage—a further lesson on why healthcare shouldn't be controlled by employers. "When a boss cancels everyone's insurance during a work stoppage, it's a teachable moment," says Rand Wilson, a Service Employees International Union staffer in Boston. "It really gets people thinking about what's wrong with having medical coverage tied to their job. The financial risks and penalties of getting laid off, changing jobs, working part time or retiring early—not to mention going on strike—would all be greatly reduced if we had a Canadian-style system."

Other unions, like the United Electrical Workers, are following up Health Care Action Day with bargaining table challenges to management. UE developed an Employer Pledge that offers two choices: Either join the union in lobbying for real healthcare reform or continue to pick up the tab for the present for-profit system, with its increasingly high costs and shabby care. In Canada, where labor is fighting to improve a thirty-year-old Medicare-for-all program, the Canadian Auto Workers won business backing for the single-payer approach. In a recent letter signed jointly with the union, GM, Ford and Daimler/Chrysler demanded that Canada's "publicly funded health care system be preserved and renewed, [based] on the existing principles of universality, accessibility, portability, comprehensiveness, and public administration."

Jobs With Justice didn't attract such corporate support for Health Care Action Day. But the diversity of its labor endorsers shows how widespread conflict over cost shifting has become, in both the private and public sectors. As such disputes intensify, more trade unionists are reaching the conclusion that incremental private-sector solutions aren't the answer. As Colin Gordon concludes in *Dead on Arrival: The Politics of Health Care in Twentieth Century America*, "employment-based health insurance, floated as an alternative to public insurance in the middle years of the [last] century, is now little more than a leaky life raft for politicians clinging to budget-neutral solutions and workers with nowhere else to swim."

Growing budget deficits, legislative gridlock and huge military expenditures create a daunting context for new healthcare initiatives that would expand public coverage at the state or federal level. Nevertheless, mounting workplace attacks on employee benefits are forcing unions to fight back in a more political way for what workers really need, not just what some leaders think they can get. This represents an important first step toward revitalizing labor involvement in healthcare reform—and projecting unions as a champion of all workers, not just those with a membership card. ■

## LETTERS
CONTINUED

*(Continued From Page 2)*

cials about the pace of the program. But Hough doesn't seem to understand that critics of US policy, like Ambassador White and many labor leaders, objected to AIFLD's dogmatic and simplistic insistence that El Salvador's crisis was part of a Communist conspiracy to take over Latin America. In a February 2, 1982, debate on PBS with AIFLD director Bill Doherty, White stated that "90 percent of the people who are fighting are fighting because they either fight or they get killed by the security forces. Those are the alternatives." Doherty replied, "I'm much more concerned that the people with the guns are Marxist-Leninist, and they've got to lay down those guns or we're going to have another Cuban or Nicaraguan type solution." White's comments, then and now, are much closer to the truth than Hough's version of events.

Finally, I didn't mean to imply that the papers in the AFL-CIO archives are "classified" in the same sense as government documents. The Meany Center's archivists have done a magnificent job in cataloguing what is available to them, and I wouldn't have run across half of what I found without their help. Yet Merrill's doubts about the possibility of missing or culled documents underscores the importance of making certain that *all* records about the AFL-CIO's actions overseas—including those covered by the twenty-year rule—are carefully preserved. Policy decisions about the archives, of course, are up to the AFL-CIO. But so far, John Sweeney has refused every request for a full and honest airing of their contents, let alone apologize for the harm done to workers, here and abroad, by the actions of his predecessors. And that's a crying shame. TIM SHORROCK

### LETTER ON ZIMBABWE

*Chico, Calif.*

■ Gabrielle Menezes provided a compelling view of rural suffering caused by government corruption and a savage drought ["Letter From Zimbabwe," May 12]. The breakdown of civil society under the harsh regime of Robert Mugabe was accelerated by the strictures imposed by the World Bank's structural adjustment programs. Zimbabwean misery over the past fifteen years was the result of local mismanagement and gross inequities in the region's political economy. Having recently worked in rural South Africa in similarly dire conditions, I assure you that perhaps the last thing on most Africans' minds is sexual activity. It is no accident that the clinical symptoms that define a so-called AIDS case (fever, diarrhea, weight loss and persistent cough) are actually manifestations of protein anemia, unsanitary living conditions, tuberculosis, unclean drinking water and parasitic infections. People are hurting in Zimbabwe because of an impoverished political economy, food shortages and untreated illnesses, not because of sexual promiscuity. Once we stop the "medicalization of poverty" and the racist "sexualization of everyday life" in southern Africa, we will recognize what is really making people sick there.

CHARLES GESHEKTER
*Professor of African history*

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 6)

fueled a brutal commerce in human beings then, and it fuels a brutal commerce in conflict minerals today. It's time to call a halt.

ADAM HOCHSCHILD

*Adam Hochschild's most recent books are* King Leopold's Ghost *(Houghton Mifflin) and* Finding the Trapdoor *(Syracuse).*

# *Privatizing Medicare*

The Medicare bills passed by the Senate Finance Committee on June 12 and the House Ways and Means Committee on June 17 move the thirty-eight-year-old social insurance program one step closer to privatization. The committees outlined the acceptable framework for a drug benefit sorely needed by the 40 million seniors and disabled people covered by Medicare. Considering that the median income for beneficiaries is only $14,300, and a quarter of them spend more than $100 a month on prescriptions, the need for government help is obvious.

But all the talk of a drug benefit obscures the real reason Republicans are pushing hard for their brand of reform, which calls for privately run managed-care plans to provide the benefit. Adding government-subsidized drug coverage to Medicare doesn't require managed care. Congress could simply add a Part C drug benefit and be done with it. But many lawmakers have another agenda—to get the government out of the Medicare business. To do that, they would herd beneficiaries into managed care, either HMOs or the less tightly controlled PPOs (preferred provider organizations), which would provide all benefits instead of the federal government. The government would give plans a sum of money, as it does now, to pay for care, but over time it could give less and less. Beneficiaries would have to make up the difference, which could be huge, since costs are not likely to go down. Eventually there would be no Medicare, with its social insurance cross-subsidies that make it possible to insure huge numbers of people 65 or older, who are more likely to be ill. Everyone would get benefits in the private market.

Until June 12 the Bush Administration had hoped to entice beneficiaries into HMOs and PPOs by offering drug benefits only to those willing to leave traditional Medicare. But Bush changed his mind, and under the Senate Finance Committee plan, even those who stay in Medicare will get some drug coverage. That was enough to persuade some Democrats, including Ted Kennedy, to sign on. The House bill also gives a benefit to those remaining on Medicare but would not require the government to step in with a benefit if the private plans don't provide the coverage.

Bush has acquiesced for now, but the issue is far from dead. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson made that clear when he was asked if the Administration was trying to change the provision in the Senate bill that called for benefit parity. He replied, "Not really at this point in time." That leaves the door open in the House, which votes on the bill at the end of June.

To see what will happen with a managed-care strategy, we need look no further than California, where a decade ago seniors flocked to Medicare HMOs for their generous prescription-drug coverage and extra benefits for dental, vision and chiropractic care. For the past three years, the Center for Consumer Health Choices at Consumers Union, in partnership with the California Healthcare Foundation, has rated every Medicare HMO in the state for its drug coverage and overall financial value, taking benefits into account, as well as the premiums and co-payments beneficiaries pay. This continuing study shows that the value of HMO benefits has steadily declined—beneficiaries pay more and get less for their money. This year the number of top-rated plans dropped 86 percent from two years ago, and only 11 percent received a four- or five-star rating compared with 44 percent in 2001. For the first time, no HMO earned five stars for prescription drug coverage. Worse, many plans now charge complex co-payments for hospital services and deductibles as high as $2,200, which had never before been part of their Medicare benefit package. In Orange County, for example, beneficiaries can choose between Aetna, with its hospital co-payment of $100 per day for days one through five, and Kaiser, which has a $500 co-payment for any stay no matter how long. Which is the better choice?

What happened in California was predictable, given Medicare's reimbursement rates. The 1997 Balanced Budget Act limited annual increases to about 2 percent. Congress wanted to slow the growth in the program. HMOs say that now they're coming up short, and they're forcing plan members to make up the shortfall. That's exactly what will happen under a privatized Medicare system when Congress decides to spend money elsewhere. Today HMO members who don't want to pay the extra fees can return to traditional Medicare for their benefits. But under a totally privatized arrangement, there will be no affordable fallback option.

Both sides grumble that both bills are flawed. Democrats argue that the benefit is too skimpy. Except for those with very low incomes, beneficiaries under the Senate version will have to pay a monthly premium of $35, a deductible of $275, half of all drug costs from $276 to $4,500, then all costs up to $5,800 and 10 percent of amounts above that—coverage that is likely to help only those with extraordinarily high expenses. Republicans want more people in HMOs so they can move them faster down the privatization path, and the promise of a drug benefit is the ideal vehicle for doing that. An influential Capitol Hill lobbyist says the worst fears about Medicare won't materialize this year. Members of Congress want some bill enacted and have no appetite for a protracted fight heading into an election year. But, he warned, if Republicans widen their majority in the next election, that could mean the end of Medicare as we know it, opening the possibility for a return to the days before 1965, when the nation's elders went without insurance and without healthcare.

TRUDY LIEBERMAN

*Trudy Lieberman is the director of the Center for Consumer Health Choices at Consumers Union.*

**ON THE WEB:** A Federal appeals court has ruled against *The Nation* and others seeking the names of foreigners detained after 9/11. Dan Forbes details how an unnecessary new law—the Rave Act—is being used to undermine legitimate dissent.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

# The Empire Strikes Back

*Imperialism isn't pretty. Add a sense of righteous victimhood and it's downright dangerous.*

ANATOL LIEVEN

A few years in Washington, DC, snake-oil capital of the universe, and you begin to think that anything can be packaged as something else. Well, almost anything. Until I read *Empire*, by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, I would never have believed that a postmodernist paean to Italian anarcho-syndicalism could be presented by its publishers as a defense of "the idealism of the Founders and Abraham Lincoln," and of the universal validity of the US Constitution.

This wonderful joke is the best thing about Hardt and Negri's book, which otherwise is distinguished by a clarity of language and coherence of thought processes that suggest an Italianate *Finnegans Wake*. Its history is often quite fanciful. Its portrait of the liberating work practices of the postmodern industrial proletariat would seem to be drawn from the life of a SoHo fashion designer. Its vision of the improving possibilities of bioengineering as far as the mass of humanity is concerned displays an extraordinary naïveté concerning the realities of wealth and power. As for its vision of a modern world "empire," this is not without interest as a portrait of certain aspects of "globalization," but the authors' attempts to define this picture as an "empire," and to distinguish "empire" both from "imperialism" and from contemporary American hegemony are strained, to say the least.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that this curious choice of the word "empire" as a name for these patterns of globalization reflects the new modishness of empire as a subject—as witnessed by the number of books now appearing on this theme. Only a few years ago, to use this word to describe the United States would have branded you automatically as a member of the left. Today, it is being taken up by writers across the spectrum, and with unbridled pride by right-wingers like Max Boot of the *Wall Street Journal*.

But, as Niall Ferguson notes in the conclusion to his vivid and often insightful history of the British Empire, this new open popularity of empire as a self-description in the United States is so far characteristic only of intellectuals. As far as the mass of the American people is concerned, this is still "an empire in denial." And in presenting its imperial plans to the American people, the Bush Administration has been careful to package them as something else: on the one hand, as part of a benevolent strategy of spreading American values of democracy and freedom; on the other, as an essential part of the defense not of an American empire, but of the American nation itself.

This is something that must be stressed if the power and the danger, but also the fragility, of the Bush program are to be understood: The United States under Bush is driving toward empire, but the domestic political fuel being fed into the engine is that of a wounded and vengeful nationalism. This sentiment is for the most part entirely sincere, and all the more dangerous for that. If recent history is any guide, there is probably no more dangerous element in the nationalist mix than a sense of righteous victimhood. Will this fuel continue to be available to the Bush Administration in its drive for empire? Or to put it another way, will the packaging retain its shine? This depends partly on whether the United States comes under further massive attack by Islamist terrorists, but still more on the extent of the sacrifices that ordinary Americans will be called upon to make for the sake of empire.

An unwillingness on the part of the masses to make serious sacrifices for empire is hardly new. As Ferguson points out, until the First World War the British Empire was conquered and run very much on the cheap, and this was true of the other colonial empires as well. The Royal Navy was

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**BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY:**

**AMERICAN EMPIRE: The Realities and Consequences of US Diplomacy.**
By Andrew J. Bacevich.
Harvard.
302 pp. $29.95.

**SPECIAL PROVIDENCE: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World.**
By Walter Russell Mead.
Routledge.
378 pp. Paper $19.95.

**EMPIRE: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power.**
By Niall Ferguson.
Basic.
392 pp. $35.

**THE DECLINE OF AMERICAN POWER.**
By Immanuel Wallerstein.
New Press.
294 pp. Paper $14.95.

**THE SAVAGE WARS OF PEACE: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power.**
By Max Boot.
Basic.
448 pp. Paper $16.

**EMPIRE.**
By Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.
Harvard.
478 pp. Paper $18.95.

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of course expensive, but then it doubled as the absolutely necessary defense of the British Isles themselves against invasion or blockade. Then as now, given the overwhelming superiority of Western firepower and military organization, enormous territories could be conquered at very low cost and risk. When European empires ran into areas that were truly costly to conquer and hold—the British in Afghanistan, the Italians in Ethiopia—they tended to back off. And in Ferguson's view, the unprecedentedly high rate of casualties among white British troops in the Boer War helped initiate the process of British disillusionment with empire.

This was something of which the general staffs and the conservative establishments of Europe were well aware. Acute students both of Clausewitz and of police reports on the mood of their working classes, they knew the importance of mass support for any serious war, and the limits on how far empire could be used for purposes of mass mobilization. So sensible governments with the ability to do so always used volunteer troops and foreign mercenaries, not conscripts, for colonial wars—the French Foreign Legion, for instance, was created for this explicit purpose.

In his 1983 study *The Conquest of Morocco*, Douglas Porch offers a fascinating description of the various stratagems used by General Lyautey and the other French imperialists to convince a skeptical French public to support this adventure, which many regarded as a costly distraction from the need to strengthen France's defenses against the real national threat, Germany. These ranged from religious appeals to convert Morocco through civilizational arguments about the need to create a modern Moroccan state, to suggestions that because Germany also had designs on Morocco, it was necessary to combat Germany there as well as in the fields of Lorraine.

In their efforts to rally democratic support as a defense against socialism at home, the capitalist elites in Europe before 1914 similarly relied much less on imperialism than on nationalism. And in 1914, the impulse that drove the European masses to support the war and to immolate themselves in it was nationalism, universally expressed in the belief that the homeland itself was in imminent danger of attack. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have given the Bush Administration a tremendous opportunity in this regard, one they have exploited to the hilt. For that matter, Bush's election campaign vastly played down his followers' imperial ambitions (remember the call for American "modesty"?) while appealing to "folk values" closely associated with what Walter Russell Mead has dubbed "Jacksonian nationalism," against the alien, European-influenced cultural elitism of Gore and the "East Coast elites."

But nationalism is a notoriously wild horse to let loose. At the time of writing, a critical question hanging over the American empire in the Middle East is whether, for the sake of that empire, Bush will be able to confront an Israeli nationalism that members of his own Administration themselves partly share, and that they have also inflamed and exploited for domestic political ends. If he is not willing to take the domestic political risk of confronting this nationalism (which for many Americans has become deeply entwined with their American nationalism), then his imperial project in the Middle East will become much costlier and more dangerous.

*Democracies may go to war less willingly than dictatorships, but when they do so, they have a tendency to fight with fewer restraints.*

Even Mead, who gives a sympathetic portrait of the Jacksonian nationalist tradition in his splendid new book, also worries about the tendency of its adherents to be carried away by furious emotion, and to switch from contemptuous indifference to the outside world to a spirit of annihilatory ruthlessness if they feel that America has been attacked. As he and others have pointed out, democracies may go to war less willingly than autocracies, but when they do so, they have a tendency to fight with fewer restraints and to aim for total rather than partial victory.

The European nationalist death-ride unleashed in 1914 began by destroying the sons of the old European elites, and by 1945 had destroyed their dominance and in many cases their countries as well. They may have started the war; unlike the coolheaded nineteenth-century imperialists in their overseas campaigns, they were unable to stop it even when it became apparent that its course was disastrous to them and their countries. As Dick Diver puts it in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*, "This was a love battle—there was a century of middle-class love spent here.... All my beautiful lovely safe world blew itself up here with a great gust of high explosive love."

Here lies one clue to the difference between the American imperialism of Clinton and that of Bush, a difference that is real but—like the relationships between nationalism, capitalism and imperialism—is also by no means simple. Clinton packaged American imperialism as globalism, and he was also genuinely motivated by a vision of global order in which America would lead rather than merely dictate. Bush is not just packaging imperialism as American nationalism; he and his followers are genuinely motivated by nationalism, in a way that Clinton was not, and, as nationalists, they are absolutely contemptuous of any global order involving any formal check whatsoever on American action.

Within the United States, empire as such still needs to be wrapped up. The United States has a tradition of hostility to empire going back to its own revolution against the British and its foundation as an independent state. This hostility therefore became one element in what Samuel Huntington and others have called "the American creed," or national ideology. But as American historians of many different political stripes have pointed out, the language of imperial expansion also dates back to the earliest years of the American Republic, and was not restricted to the North American continent. In the decades before the Civil War, the South in particular bubbled with demands for the annexation of Cuba and even Mexico. Although such thinking exploded in the run-up to the Spanish-American War of 1898, it had been percolating for some time.

In a fascinating new study, Andrew Bacevich, a distinguished soldier-turned-historian, traces the strong continuities from the 1890s in American thought and action since the end of the cold war, above all, the use of the language of civilizational duty (to the spread of democracy, freedom and good government) as a justification for imperial conquest—though except for historical romantics like Boot, the explicit language of the "white man's burden" has been abandoned, even if its spirit remains. Of course, 1898, like 2003, is special, since it was in that year that the United States began to imitate the nineteenth-century European colonial empires and to establish direct imperial rule over foreign possessions. Elsewhere, the United States has generally either annexed those territories whose small populations it could swamp (Hawaii, northern Mexico) or exerted indirect dominance, as in Central America: neocolonialism *avant la lettre*.

When it comes to the exertion of such in-

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direct imperial control, it is possible to draw a rather straight line from the Monroe Doctrine to the Bush Doctrine. Thus Walter Russell Mead argues that US strategy since 1945 has progressively extended tougher and tougher versions of the Monroe Doctrine from Latin America to the entire world. In his view, the moves of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his successors to dismantle the British and French colonial empires directly echo Monroe's rejection of European empires and spheres of influence in the Americas, while Bush II's doctrine, like Theodore Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, asserts the universal right of US intervention not only in defense of its own interests but for the sake of the replacement and reordering of "rogue states" and hostile regimes.

Neither Mead nor Bacevich would see much difference in this regard between Bush and Clinton, both of whom, in their view, implemented an American imperial project with deep roots in the very nature of America's state and society. For them, Bush's Iraq is just Clinton's Kosovo or Haiti on a much larger scale and with greatly increased risks. They have a point. Clinton, after all, moved rather quickly to combat Russia's plans to retain a sphere of influence in the territory of the former Soviet Union and was not too scrupulous about the regimes he helped in the process. Clinton preserved NATO as what was then seen as the essential vehicle of US strategic dominance in Europe and, as Bacevich argues, fought the Kosovo war largely in order to justify NATO's continued existence as this vehicle.

This is a view essentially shared by Immanuel Wallerstein and other Marxist historians, though they would of course add that this imperial drive is also implicit in the nature of American capitalism. Is this vision of imperial continuity between the administrations correct? And if so, why the intense nostalgia for the Clinton Administration now felt by so much of the world, especially in Europe? Is this just the lingering after-effect of the old rogue's seductions, a striking case of huge masses of people mistaking form for substance, the packaging for the contents?

Not entirely. In the first place, it must be noted that, to a considerable extent, American power in the world, especially after the disappearance of the only other superpower, has been not only a willed project but also an objective fact, and this is bound to be reflected both in US policies and in the reactions of other countries to the United States. Even if the United States had carried out much deeper cuts in military spending than occurred in the


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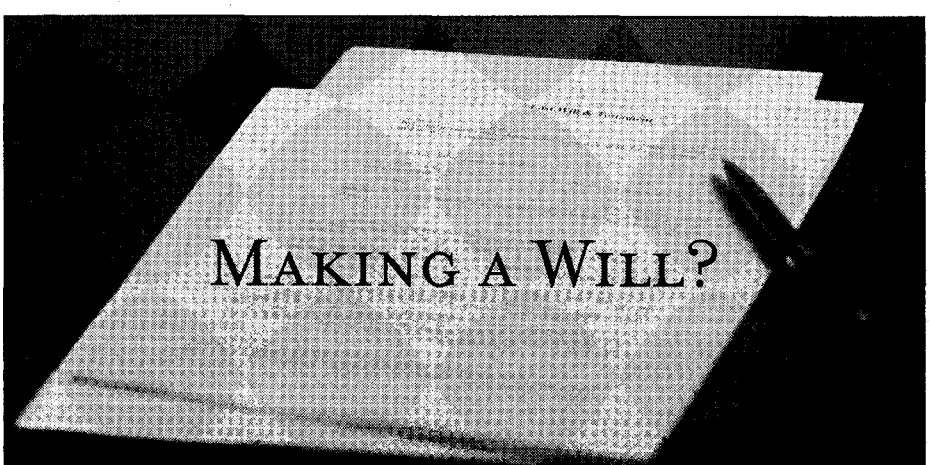


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*Russell Simmons is a longstanding* Nation *reader.*

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1990s, the collapse of the Soviet military would still have left the United States far and away the strongest military power on the planet. Moreover, in seeking to understand the direction of US world policy, it is, of course, critically important to analyze the great abstractions: imperialism, capitalism, nationalism. But in doing so, it is also important not to lose sight of the role of chance events (notably 9/11), of personality and of differing political cultures and ideological currents within America.

Or, to put it at its crudest, imperialism, like any other program, can be conducted intelligently or stupidly. One aspect of this is the packaging. *Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*, said the Romans. "Speak softly and carry a big stick," said Teddy Roosevelt, and, doubtless, similar phrases exist in Chinese and Quechua. But this tactical difference may also reflect a deeper difference of strategy. Drawing a diplomatic veil over the extent of other countries' inferiority to yours in terms of power, and presenting your plans in terms of alliances rather than unilateral action, may also reflect a desire to co-opt rather than conquer, and show a more acute awareness of the actual limitations on your own power. The German and Japanese empires of the twentieth century failed not only because they started late and from an inadequate power base but because they conducted their foreign policies with an incredible degree of savage stupidity.

From this point of view, Clinton may well be justifiably seen by future generations as a particularly intelligent and valuable servant of American imperial capitalism, in a way that went beyond diplomatic cleverness. He seems to have understood three things that the Bush Administration has wholly or partly forgotten: that the American economy is utterly intertwined with the world capitalist order, depends on the health of that order and draws immense benefits from that order. This is indeed likely to be seen by future historians as the central tragic irony of the Bush Administration's world policy: that the United States, which of all states today should feel like a satisfied power, is instead behaving like a revolutionary one, kicking to pieces the hill of which it is king.

Clinton's policy, by contrast, was much more that of a stable hegemon. It was rooted in a recognition that the present age, especially since the collapse of Soviet Communism, has offered the American government unprecedented opportunities when it comes to co-opting the elites of other major states and defusing radical hostility to the United States. As noted above, the notion of "democratic peace" is deeply flawed and ambiguous, historically speaking. It is of especially questionable value in today's world, when so many countries are in fact only shell democracies, in which democratic government acts as a cover for oligarchical rule. Moreover, by far the single greatest example of successful capitalist economic development, China, is not a democracy and shows few signs of becoming one.

However, what has happened—first in China and then in Russia—is that the political elites of these countries have become massive property-holders, and this in turn has given them a massive stake in the stability of the international capitalist system, and hence in the avoidance of major war. It may be argued, of course, that this was also true of the European elites of 1914. But unlike their predecessors, the elites of today do not come trailing a heritage of military aristocracy led by military monarchy; and the masses over which they are ruling, like those of the West over the past century, have been largely demilitarized by socio-economic change and urbanization. So while the notion of a "democratic peace" may be overblown, that of a "capitalist peace" seems valid—as long as the United States does not so infuriate and humiliate the rulers of other major countries as to lead them to forget their own best interests. It may be, however, that their fears in this regard are exaggerated, and that as far as the threat from the United States is concerned they just have to sit it out for ten or twenty years, until a majority of Americans decide that empire is just not worth the cost.

*The United States under George W. Bush is behaving like a revolutionary power, kicking to pieces the hill of which it is king.*

What Clinton—like Eisenhower—also realized is that the expansion of raw, direct American power in the world depends on and is also limited by the need to maintain the health of the US economy, and through this the economic well-being and hence the long-term political support of the majority of the American people. For the US imperial project suffers from three main underlying weaknesses. The first is the new threat to the American mainland from terrorism using weapons of mass destruction. In the short term, this, as I have suggested, can even strengthen US imperialism by adding the fuel of national vengeance; but if, God forbid, terrorists ever gain the ability to strike such heavy blows that they seriously damage the US economy, then American power will also be weakened.

The second weakness is lack of military resources. This may sound absurd, given the fact that America is now spending nearly as much on the military as the rest of the world put together. If one looks at the actual numbers of US troops, however, a rather different picture begins to emerge. For if the United States spends much more than anyone else on its troops, its troops are also much more expensive to maintain than those of most other countries, and more costly than the "scum of the earth" who staffed the colonial armies of the nineteenth century. It does not have very many of them, and a very high proportion of them are now tied down for the foreseeable future patrolling Iraq. It may be, therefore, as many US officials say in private, that the Bush Doctrine was a "doctrine for one case only"—namely Iraq; and that a planned war to invade and occupy Iran or North Korea is inconceivable. That doesn't necessarily mean that such wars won't happen, but that they will be the accidental rather than the deliberate results of Bush Administration policies.

This brings me back to the third weakness: the willingness of American citizens, particularly among the elites, to make sacrifices for the sake of empire. For one thing is gradually becoming clear: Given its immense wealth, the United States can afford a military capable of dominating the earth; or it can afford a stable, secure system of social and medical entitlements for a majority of its aging population; or it can afford massive tax cuts for its wealthiest citizens and no tax raises for the rest. But it cannot afford all three, unless it can indefinitely sustain them through a combination of massive trade deficits and international borrowing. This seems most unlikely, especially in the midst of a global economic downturn.

It is quite true, as the radical imperialists argue, that in the 1950s the United States sustained far higher levels of military spending as a proportion of the budget and GDP, but at that time, the rest of government spending was considerably lower, and the United States was in the midst of an era of very steep economic growth lasting three decades. Unless today's US and world economies can return to such growth—not for years but for decades—then something is sooner or later going to break, and break disastrously, if the Bush Administration continues its present policies. Such a disaster, however, would engulf not only the American empire but the lives and hopes of countless Americans, the stability and growth of the present world economic system, and possibly even the US political order. And this would be the ultimate

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American tragedy, for it is above all the mixture of economic opportunity and the US Constitution that are the bedrock of America's moral and ideological power in the world today, and will be America's chief legacy to future ages of the world.

It is interesting in the light of all this to revisit the work of Immanuel Wallerstein. The title of his new book, *The Decline of American Power*, appears curious at first sight. So regularly has Wallerstein predicted the decline of American power over the decades, and so steeply has American power in fact risen, that he has often appeared as the boy who cried wolf. But then, in the fable, the wolf, of course, eventually turned out to be all too real, just a bit late. And even if one finds Wallerstein's model of the world system too schematic and undifferentiated, he is still worth reading for the tremendous breadth of his scholarship and the fecundity of his insights.

Among these is his grasp of the essentially insatiable nature of capitalism—or at least of American capitalism, for one criticism that might be made of Wallerstein is his relative indifference to the importance of different national cultures in capitalism. Anyone who doubts their importance even when it comes to economic policy might want to contrast the two great newspapers of the Western capitalist classes, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times*, and note the horrified incredulity with which *FT* writers have attacked the Bush Administration's tax cuts, so ardently demanded by the editorial page of the *Journal*.

For just as US imperialism, emboldened by a strong shot of nationalism, is busy undermining the world political order of which the United States is hegemon, so dominant sections of the US capitalist elite are suicidally gobbling up the fiscal foundations of American economic stability and the American capitalist system. Their pathological hatred of FDR, who did more than any other man in the twentieth century to preserve and extend American capitalism, has been echoed in our own day by their visceral, hysterical loathing of Clinton, who, objectively speaking, also served them very well. This is a truly strange and awful sight, and—*pace* Niall Ferguson—one that bears little resemblance to the behavior of the old British imperial elites, at least once their empire had been achieved. In their criminal arrogance, these contemporary American projects and attitudes are much more reminiscent of Wilhelmine Germany, and we must hope that they do not receive a condign punishment. For in the words of Arnold Toynbee, "great empires do not die by murder, but suicide." ■

THEATER

# Playing the Field

DAVID KAUFMAN

**TAKE ME OUT • THE LAST SUNDAY IN JUNE**

"In society the homosexual's life must be discreetly concealed. As material for drama, that life must be even more intensely concealed. If [a homosexual playwright] is to write of his experience, he must invent a two-sex version of the one-sex experience that he really knows."

Though many realized that Stanley Kauffmann was writing about Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee and William Inge when he brandished those controversial words in the *New York Times*, he didn't dare cite the playwrights by name. The year was 1966, and to paraphrase the opening lines of L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*, we all did things somewhat differently back then.

Of course, Kauffmann had no idea that a landmark gay drama called *The Boys in the Band* would open Off Broadway in only two years, and help spark a gay revolution the following summer. And like the theater itself, we've come a long way in the intervening decades. The voice that dared not speak its name has been shouting ever since, not least in the theater, where the countless openly gay plays that followed *The Boys in the Band* have continued to fuel the gay movement, while tracing its trajectory.

Richard Greenberg's *Take Me Out*, which is currently playing at the Walter Kerr Theater on Broadway and has just won the Tony Award, is indeed one of the best gay plays in years. When it opened at the Public Theater last fall, this ambitious new comic drama was an unwieldy work that tried to say too many things simultaneously, without its prolific playwright's customary grace. In the course of tightening his script for the play's move to Broadway in February, however, Greenberg has created an intricately woven and multidimensional work that defies glib classification.

By focusing on the aftershocks that occur when a star ballplayer tells the media that he's gay, Greenberg seamlessly ties together matters of sex, race, multiculturalism, politics, political correctness and celebrity in *Take Me Out*. The title alone is a "triple" play-on-words that refers to the refrain from the familiar baseball song, to coming out of the closet and to a climactic beanball murder. The phrase is also used in the play when someone says that baseball, at its best, "takes you out" of yourself.

The star player is Darren Lemming, a member of the Empires, the defending world champions. (From their uniforms to the stadium's distinctive Gothic top deck, the Empires unmistakably evoke the Yankees.) The team includes a couple of Latinos who keep to themselves, as well as a Japanese pitcher who doesn't speak English. Another teammate, Kippy, serves as an omniscient narrator, delivering Greenberg's liquid exposition.

In an opening prologue, Kippy introduces us to Darren, a "one-man emblem of racial harmony...a black man who had obviously never suffered." When someone sarcastically asks Darren who made him God, he replies—without a trace of irony—"God made me God." Given his galloping egotism, his "aura of invincibility," Darren thinks nothing of casually admitting that he's gay during a news conference, apparently heedless of any repercussions.

"This changes nothing, Darren," says Skipper, the manager of the Empires who will do anything to appease his top player. One dimwitted teammate complains of feeling self-conscious in the locker room, even as he continues to parade around in the nude—as does most of the cast during a couple of controversial shower scenes. But, remarkable enough, nothing does seem to change, at first. Then along comes Shane Mungitt. A hot, young, fastballing pitcher, Shane helps the team recover from a losing streak. But he is also an antisocial redneck hillbilly, reminiscent of John Rocker. (One of Greenberg's many humorous conceits is that Shane grew up in Arkansas, Tennessee *and* Mississippi.) At the end of Act I, which began with Darren's disclosure, Shane tells a group of reporters, "Now don't get me wrong. I don't mind the colored people—

*David Kaufman's new book,* Ridiculous! The Theatrical Life and Times of Charles Ludlam *(Applause), has just won both the Theatre Library Association's George Freedley Award for Oustanding Theater Book of the Year and the LAMBDA Literary Award for Biography.*

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the gooks an' the spics an' the coons an' like that. But every night t'have'ta take a shower with a faggot!? Do ya know what I'm sayin'?"

As *Take Me Out* continues to grapple with its overlapping themes, there are several surprising developments in the second act, which both provoke and follow the suspension of Shane but which won't be divulged here. (Kippy refers to the ensuing events as "the Kafkaesque part of the evening—well, Kafka-lite.") But versatile juggler that he is, Greenberg never loses sight of his ambition to convey his personal love of baseball, which he does primarily through Darren's new accountant, Mason. A timid, self-effacing gay man, Mason knows nothing about the sport when he begins working for Darren, but he gradually comes alive through his burgeoning love of the game as well as his unexpressed adoration of his client.

Greenberg reserves some of his most eloquent writing for Mason, who shares what he learns with us. "Baseball is unrelentingly meaningful," says Mason, who explains:

> I have come to understand that baseball is a perfect metaphor for hope in a democratic society. It has to do with the rules of play. It has to do with the mode of enforcement of these rules. It has to do with certain nuances and grace notes of the game.... Baseball is better than Democracy—or at least than Democracy as it's practiced in this country—because unlike Democracy, baseball acknowledges loss. While conservatives tell you, leave things alone and no one will lose, and liberals tell you, interfere a lot and no one will lose, baseball says: someone will lose. Not only says it—insists upon it!... Democracy is lovely, but baseball's more mature.

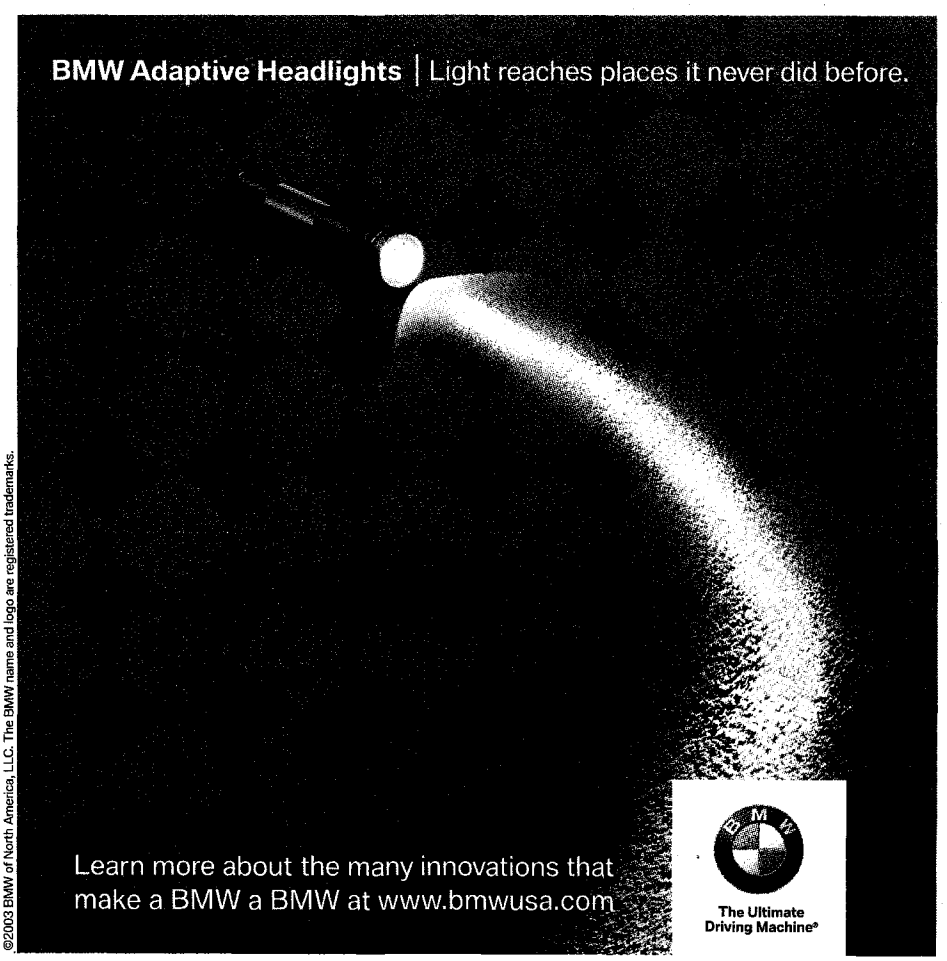
Both as written by Greenberg and as brought to jubilant life by the gifted character actor Denis O'Hare, Mason is irresistible. Under Joe Mantello's fluid direction, one of the many mysteries of the production is how O'Hare manages to keep the audience in his thrall without detracting from the rest of the impeccable ensemble. (O'Hare and Mantello both won Tony Awards as well for their respective contributions.) Among the other players, the usually suave Frederick Weller is alarmingly real as the illiterate Shane, and Daniel Sunjata does a subtle job of finding the loneliness beneath Darren's smug superiority. If anything, it's another sign of how far we've come that an openly gay playwright like Greenberg no longer feels the need to paint an exclusively favorable portrait of a gay protagonist like Darren. And yet the backlash to Darren's disclosure suggests that we live in a world that still harbors some backwoods bias.

Or do we? Perhaps a more telling, up-to-the-minute measure of just how much gay culture has seeped into the mainstream—and vice versa—is offered by Bert Archer in *The End of Gay (and the Death of Heterosexuality)*. This intriguing new treatise, published by Fusion Press, forcefully argues that the gay/straight divide has broken down in recent years. The success of gender-bending performers like Madonna, the proliferation of same-sex unions and adoptions, and the mass appeal of shows like *Queer as Folk* and *Six Feet Under* all indicate, in Archer's view, that the gay movement was a phase we have passed through, comparable to feminism. We have transcended what he calls the "binary nature of sexuality," and crossed to the other side of a gender-fractured world.

The title of Archer's essay is, to say the least, provocative. But the book should not be dismissed as the idiosyncratic findings of a radical gay thinker. Indeed, the arrival of Jonathan Tolins's new play, *The Last Sunday in June*, which recently moved from the tiny Rattlestick Theater to Off Broadway's Century Center for the Performing Arts, suggests that Archer is on to something. The play's title refers to the annual Gay Pride Day and parade that commemorate the 1969 Stonewall uprising in New York, but it also evokes Archer's sense that gay liberation has reached a turning point, if not exactly a moment of closure.

With self-conscious references at practically every turn, *Last Sunday* is a smart new comedy that both mimics and mocks the generic gay plays of the past four decades. Like *The Boys in the Band*—the gay granddaddy of them all—it has eight characters who engage in bitchy, rapid-fire repartee while discussing life in the gay fast lane, which, in turn, leads to some relationship-altering revelations. Terrence McNally's *Love! Valour! Compassion!* used the same formula to tackle AIDS, even as it proclaimed, in 1994, that gay men had finally surmounted the self-loathing of Mart Crowley's not-so-merry "band" of the late 1960s.

"Maybe we're postgay," says Tom, a thirty-something lawyer, early on in *The Last Sunday in June*. Tom and his partner of seven years, Michael, have plans to vacate their cramped quarters on Christopher Street for a house in Nyack. It's Gay Pride Day, and their Greenwich Village apartment provides an ideal view of the parade, so, of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course, Michael's shopping plans at Pottery Barn are disrupted as various friends pop in. The visitors span several generations, embodying the arc of gay identity over the past few decades. The first guest to appear is Joe, a boyish actor in his late 20s. He is soon followed by the HIV-positive Brad, a fortyish journalist who has lost a lover to AIDS, and then by Charles, a 50-year-old manager of opera singers. When Charles says that Michael's precarious perch on the window ledge makes him look like a character in a play, he both introduces the self-referential motif of *Last Sunday*, and prompts some witty banter. "It could be a gay play, about gays on Gay Pride Day," continues Charles.

> Michael: "Just what we need, another gay play."
>
> Charles: "Don't knock gay theater. It's very important historically. It used to be the only way we could see ourselves."
>
> Brad: "Well, now we're 'Must-See TV,' so get over it."

Later, when a body-builder named Scott comes up from the parade to use the bathroom, Charles quips: "The unexpected arrival of the shirtless hunk—you can't have a gay play without one." Then, after Joe suggests that the fashionable juicer in the kitchen can be used as a "prop in the play" and turned on to indicate whenever someone is lying, inevitably it is. In the end, we learn that Tom and Michael do not have the model relationship of fidelity that both they and the others assumed they had.

But the real drama in *Last Sunday* unfolds with the arrival of Tom's ex-lover, James. Tolins may well have had Larry Kramer in mind when he conceived of James—notably the Larry Kramer who denounced promiscuity in his pre-AIDS novel, *Faggots* (1978). Not only has James written a novel about the gay scene, he has also come to detest the bars, the obsession with muscles and buff bodies—in short, everything the scene represents. He says he's going to renounce "the life" and marry his friend Susan. When Tom tries to win James back to the fold by mentioning their "duty to fight until we are truly recognized in the culture," James replies, "Are you serious? We're already overexposed. The culture's learned everything from us.... The war's over. We won."

The boys in Tolins's band aren't buying it, however. They invite Susan over after James leaves, hoping to talk her out of the marriage. But Susan holds her ground. When she's told that she and James will be "nothing but glorified roommates," she says, "Isn't that what all couples become in the end, if they're lucky?"

As if to say that he, too, is fed up with the gay scene, Tolins makes Susan and James the most level-headed of his characters. James's credibility is somewhat diminished by a strident performance by Mark Setlock, who wowed theatergoers several seasons ago with his one-man star turn as the harried restaurant reservationist in *Fully Committed*. But under Trip Cullman's well-paced direction, Susan Pourfar is impressively on target as the no-nonsense Susan, and the rest of the cast manages to transcend the types they portray: Arnie Burton proves especially good at locating just the right ironic tone behind Brad's many acerbic barbs.

No matter how clever and amusing it is, *Last Sunday* never entirely rises above the formula it deconstructs, to become as fine a work as Greenberg's more original *Take Me Out*. Yet it's arguably more in tune with the gay zeitgeist of today—at least as divined by Bert Archer in *The End of Gay*. Indeed, for all its shortcomings, *The Last Sunday in June* may ultimately be deemed as much a landmark as the very plays it seems to be lampooning. ■

FILMS

# Candid Camera

STUART KLAWANS

**CAPTURING THE FRIEDMANS • THE HARD WORD • FRIDAY NIGHT**

I have often been asked the difference between movie reviews and film criticism; and after much thought, I've decided the answer is about one week. That's my excuse, anyway, for not having written until now about Andrew Jarecki's highly praised debut feature, *Capturing the Friedmans*. The picture has undergone a metamorphosis since its release: changing from a made-for-TV documentary (produced through HBO) into a kind of celluloid soapbox, from whose top any number of orators can speak. If I've been slow to climb up, it's because I wanted to hear the other speeches.

They have concerned both the subject matter of the film and the nature of its materials—which is telling, since the story is inflammatory in mere paraphrase. It concerns a well-respected high school teacher in Great Neck, Long Island, Arnold Friedman, who in the mid-1980s attracted the notice of postal inspectors for having received man-on-boy pornography. A search of Friedman's house turned up many such items, along with the roster of a computer class he taught privately in his basement, to a student body that was apparently all-boy. By means of persistent questioning of the students—aided at times by hypnosis—the police brought forward dozens of complaints of sexual abuse against Friedman and his youngest son, 18-year-old Jesse, who had helped teach the class.

After bail was posted, Arnold was reduced to shuffling around the kitchen in mute humiliation, while his wife, Elaine, railed at him (now, at last, she knew why she was so neglected), and their three sons railed at her in turn. We needn't strain to imagine the gestures and vocal tones. We see and hear them as if at first hand—because the eldest son, David, had bought a video camera, and the footage he obsessively recorded of his wretched family is now a major part of this film.

So, as its title suggests, *Capturing the Friedmans* cries out for commentary on two overlapping topics. First is the question of whether the police were right to apprehend Arnold and Jesse. Did the Friedmans violate boys, or did the accusations condense out of an atmosphere of anxiety and self-righteous anger? The second question regards our right to take pictures of people, or even to look at such images. What degrees of violation are involved in using child pornography; following the TV news coverage of a juicy indictment; keeping a camera trained at all times on the members of your family; paying ten bucks to sit in a theater and gape at someone else's family breakdown?

To its credit, *Capturing the Friedmans* urges the latter question on its audience. Early on, Jarecki puts on the screen part of a video diary that David Friedman recorded in 1988. "If you're not me, you shouldn't be watching this," David says to the viewer. "Turn it off." But the footage plays on, as David breaks into screaming, wracking

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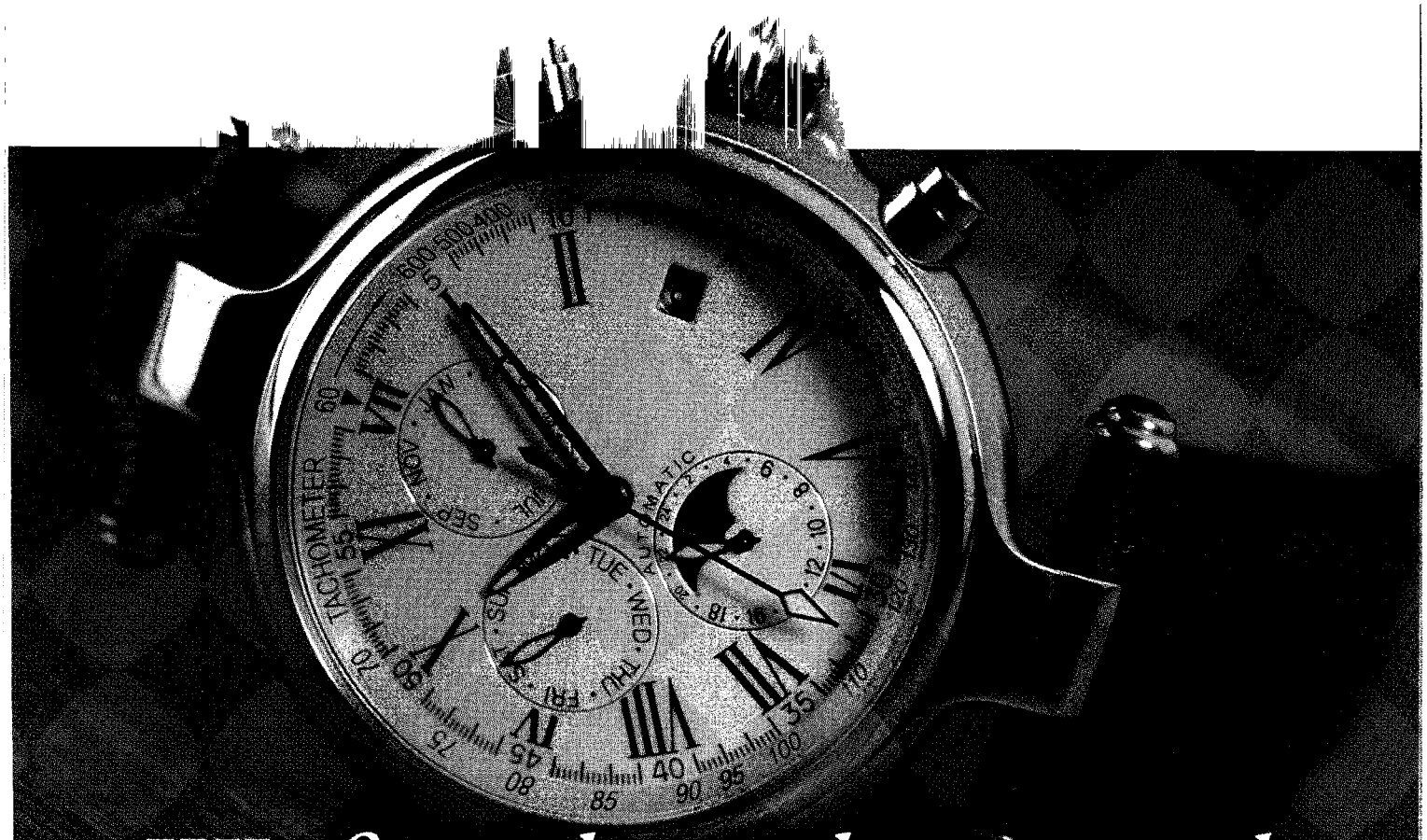


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sobs. I felt I'd crossed a line by watching—a sense of trespass that would recur many times, since Jarecki repeatedly maneuvers the viewer into an appalling intimacy with the Friedmans. He does so, of course, with footage that David willingly supplied.

In fact, David has been so cooperative that he's shown up at theaters with the film's editor and co-producer, Richard Hankin, to conduct impromptu postscreening discussions. I happened to catch one of these as I sat in a full house one recent Saturday night. The talk confirmed what I'd already concluded from the film: that David hopes *Capturing the Friedmans* may clear his father's name (to the degree that anything can) and exonerate his brother Jesse. On the evidence of the audience's response, David's trust in the filmmakers has not been misplaced.

Although people have claimed otherwise, *Capturing the Friedmans* is no more impartial than the "We Report—You Decide" productions of Fox News. Granted, the film is appropriately evenhanded toward Elaine, showing how the catastrophe that struck the rest of the family provided a much-needed opportunity for escape; and the tone overall is blessedly nonpolemical. But when it comes to the criminal charges against Arnold and Jesse, the film's show of open-mindedness amounts to a rhetorical ploy. Notice how expertly Jarecki and Hankin play out their information: getting you to suspect the worst at the start, then introducing doubts, building sympathy for the accused, dropping in surprising little revelations right up through the final reel.

I believe the filmmakers have every right to take sides this way. In fact, I admire the subtle persuasiveness with which they've done so. But I'm also intrigued that so many people deny it's been done.

The most sophisticated viewers will praise Jarecki and Hankin for their artful complexity, then speak in the next breath of the devastating truths to which the Friedmans were blind, truths that are said to have been unselfconsciously recorded as home movies, or teased out by a fair-minded outsider. Even here, under extreme test conditions, the myth of cinematic objectivity refuses to die, and for very interesting reasons. *Capturing the Friedmans* quietly convinces us that we, as viewers, may now own the truth—which makes us superior to the cops, the lawyers, the judge and the TV reporters. I need hardly add that we're also superior to the Friedmans. We're sorry for them, of course—but they were a mess. And even if, in the theater's darkness, we become secret sharers, wondering what the cops might make of some dirty part of our own lives, we remain superior. The Friedmans were caught, and we weren't.

So the title has a third meaning, as the boast of a satisfied audience. In that company, I will include myself. I think *Capturing the Friedmans* is deep, compelling, skillful and heartbreaking. But as I climb down from the soapbox, I must note that Jarecki and his collaborator, David Friedman, have captured me, too.

*Short Takes*: Let's say you went to *The Italian Job* because you were in the mood for a fleet caper film, with characters who were no better than they should be. What should you do, now that you've discovered your mistake? I think the best antidote on hand is *The Hard Word*: the story of three convict brothers in Australia who are occasionally let out of prison to rob armored cars and suchlike, with most of the take going to the warden, the cops and their lawyer.

Written and directed by Scott Roberts, *The Hard Word* has about one ending too many and three or four character resolutions too few. Apart from that, I think it's one of the more clever little mammals scurrying about for dear life beneath the feet of the summer's dinosaurs. Roberts's direction is crisp on average, with occasional flights into inventiveness; and his good bad guys have the merit of becoming more interesting as the plot unfolds (although his bad bad guys, unfortunately, do not). The film's stars are Guy Pearce, who looks thin and greasy as the plan-making brother, and Rachel Griffiths, done up as a blonde to play his none-too-loyal, seriously dirty-minded wife. But watch especially for Joel Edgerton, who appears as the youngest and most volatile of the brothers. He looks like a young Albert Finney and acts like a born scene-stealer.

Let's say, though, that you're one of those funny people who don't need their movies to be fleet. Maybe it's enough for you if pictures and sounds are sensuous and smartly put together, even if nothing much happens by way of a plot. And maybe you feel relieved if the character to whom nothing much is happening is a woman, rather than a criminal brother from Australia. For you, Claire Denis has created a wonderful little mammal called *Friday Night*.

I might say that *Friday Night* takes you through the stages of a near-anonymous one-night stand in Paris; or, to interpret the film more freely, that it brings you into a woman's fantasy of such a fling, as she imagines it on the night before she moves in with her boyfriend. Either way, what really matters is that the rooftops slowly

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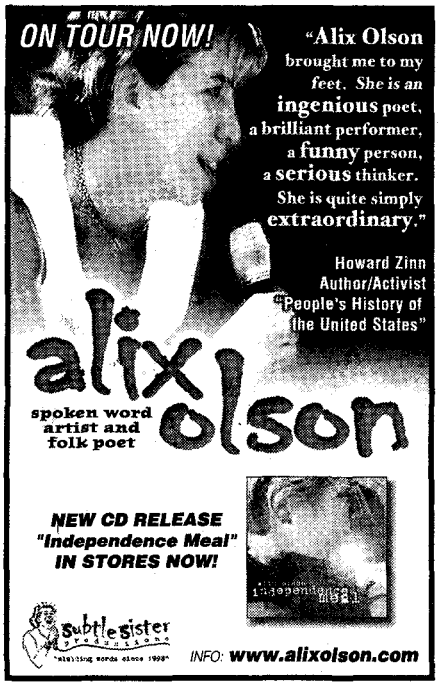
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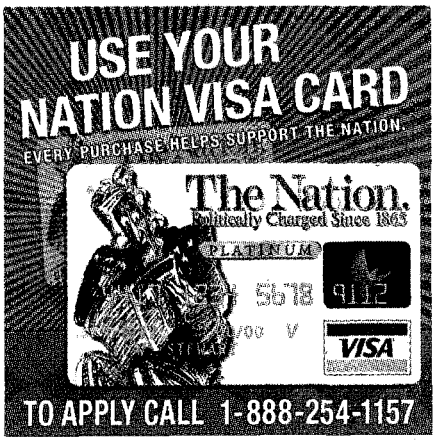


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darken until the Eiffel Tower becomes a beacon against the rose of sunset, and that Laure (Valérie Lemercier) drives out into the night and gets stuck in an impossible traffic jam. "The city is choking, everyone is exhausted," a traffic reporter says on the radio in strangely cheerful tones. "We must be generous. Try carpooling." As if called into being by this advice, a man appears and asks to sit in the car. Laure says yes, without hesitating. Jean (Vincent Lindon) then takes the wheel, and the traffic miraculously disappears. By mutual though almost wordless consent, Laure and Jean proceed from this speed derby to a hotel—or rather, according to the glowing, truncated sign, a HOT—which turns out to be entirely empty. Images of hands, clothes and parts of faces flash across the screen, as the couple satisfy themselves the first time. The second time, they get undressed. Then they go out to a near-empty restaurant for a pizza, across the surface of which the anchovy wriggles like a goofy smile.

When the night is over, Laure is happy, and Jean has not turned out to be what an American filmmaker would have made him: a serial killer, thief, sexual freak or disease-bearer. I'm glad about that, and I'm glad that Lemercier, as Laure, looks like the writer Emmanuèle Bernheim (on whose novel the film is based) and also like one of Claire Denis's artistic forebears, the filmmaker Maya Deren. She, too, might have dreamed such a movie, in which things get good for a woman after she lets a man take the wheel: a fantasy of abandoned control, realized in this case by a virtually all-woman crew that includes cinematographer Agnès Godard and editor Nelly Quettier. Another reason to like the French.

*Screening Schedule*: Over the weekend of June 21–22, the Museum of Modern Art will show films about the human and environmental costs of globalization, the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the poisoning of the village of Minimata and the ratcheting upward of the dangerous noise inside Israelis' heads. All these are selections in the museum's annual sidebar exhibition to the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar. This year, the seminar focuses on film as a tool for social responsibility and political struggle—which might sound like a yawn, unless you've seen these movies by Franny Armstrong, Tran Van Thuy, Tsuchimoto Noriaki and Avi Mograbi. For information call (212) 777-4900 or see www.moma.org.

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**JOIN THE OCA IN CANCUN:** September 4–11. The Organic Consumers Association is leading a delegation to the historic WTO demonstrations and alternative forum in Cancun, Mexico. For more info visit www.organicconsumers/wto or e-mail mexicotrip@organicconsumers.org.

## AUTHOR'S QUERY

**PROFESSOR WRITING HISTORY OF TRANQUILIZERS** solicits firsthand accounts of tranquilizer use in 1950–80 era. Please send to Dr. Andrea Tone, PO Box 33502, Decatur, GA 30033-0502.

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*When responding to Liberal Liaisons send response to The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, c/o (Box #).*

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**AKRON/KENT, OHIO *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP FORMING.** Please contact Pam by e-mail at questionaskwhy@yahoo.com or call (330) 298-9576. Will meet the second Thursday of every month from 7–9 PM.

**PITTSBURGH *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP FORMING.** Contact George Kanakis, (412) 421-3751, e-mail G.Kanakis@verizon.net.

**WESTERLY, RI, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP FORMING.** Call Patricia at (401) 596-9341 or e-mail fineco@riconnect.com.

**LEWISVILLE, TX, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP** is forming. Contact John at (972) 219-4673 for more information.

**MANCHESTER, CT, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP** forming. Call Gary at (860) 649-0574 after 6:30 PM. Planning to meet on the last Sunday of every month.

**ST. LOUIS AREA *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP NOW** forming. Please contact Mary at (314) 352-5155.

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## ORGANIZATIONS

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**CULVER CITY, CA, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP** meets on the 3rd Sunday of every month, 3–5 PM. For more information call Dorothy Gilden at (310) 391-0068.

**SAN FRANCISCO/NORTH BAY/MARIN COUNTY *NATION*** discussion group meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month in Kentfield, Marin Co., at 7:30 PM. For more information call Garry Aguilar at (415) 464-0878.

**BRADENTON/SARASOTA *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP** is meeting monthly. Please call (941) 761-4873 for time and place.

**ALBUQUERQUE *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP** meeting regularly. Call (505) 797-1455 or e-mail Helena7128@aol.com for more information.

**INTERESTED IN JOINING THE HOUSTON NATION DISCUSSION** group? Contact Charles Mauch at (713) 524-2492 or e-mail chasmauch@aol.com.

**MONTPELIER, VT, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP** is meeting. For information call (802) 229-9918 or e-mail lnichol@together.net.

**SOUTHERN VERMONT *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP** is forming, centered in Wilmington and the surrounding towns of Marlboro, Halifax, Whitingham, Readsboro, Woodford and West Dover, but all interested persons from the Brattleboro, Greenfield and Bennington areas invited to join. For information please call Bob Silverman, (802) 464-5149.

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## PUBLICATIONS

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**Attach ad, typewritten if possible.**

**The Nation, Classified Department, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003**

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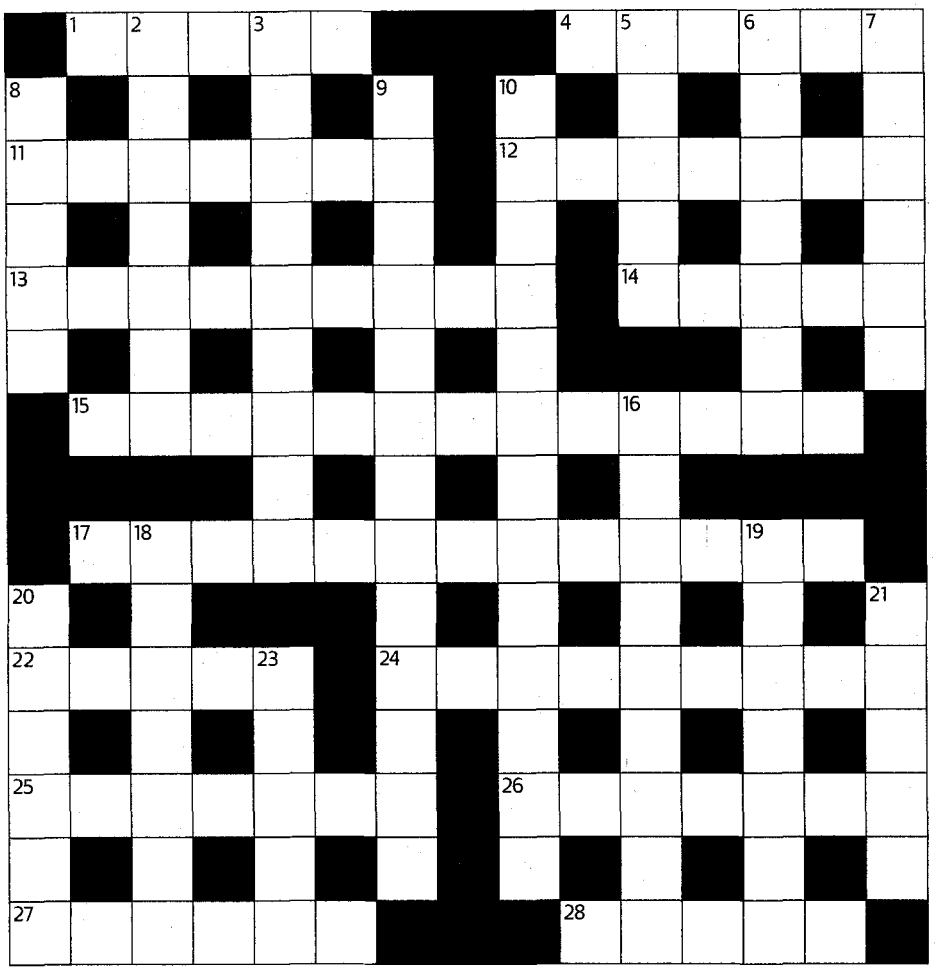
# PUZZLE NO. 2900

FRANK W. LEWIS



## ACROSS

**1** Not quite a spice, but may help make the dinner more tasty. (5)

**4** A well-known one was called a desert and behaves as the raging type does. (6)

**11** Those who outlaw things like flags? (7)

**12** Pounding things down involves recording about a thousand. (7)

**13** The type that clicked in vaudeville used to utilize the resources of Santa's reindeer. (3-6)

**14** Like, put down something valuable that you have. (5)

**15** Not the "paddy" types parked at police headquarters—more likely to transport suburbanites. (7,6)

**17** Not a very good tie-in, and a caller might complain about it. (3,10)

**22** The Spanish seem to have French style, which might be associated with Johns. (5)

**24** When the one you are handling becomes a "sleeper" you can stop putting these out. (9)

**25** Two-thirds of the game (although reversed) has a point, which shows the strategy. (7)

**26** An American shrub of the heath family, alternatively found in the makeup of a onetime TV funny lady. (7)

**27** The eatery you see labeled "Fast" if you travel near it certainly should have plenty of turnaround. (6)

**28** For example, is (as Parisians say) "discharge." (5)

## DOWN

**2** Not a freckle—it's much further removed, and possibly unstops the result! (7)

**3** One would never expect to find a stretcher like this. (9)

**5** The Bostonian hears this is the right place for one 12. (5)

**6** What one does with the mettlesome cart-puller sounds like what happens when you leave the windows open, at times. (5,2)

**7** See 20

**8** As they say, stick Housman around it as a way to make things let up. (5)

**9** Some protester might exclaim, "I'd be crazy to go and see one!" (13)

**10** Might you call strict "dealers" these, if they operated from behind, in Mississippi? (5-8)

**16** Copes with what the little dogie does, if told to do so? (4,5)

**18** Not exactly the formic type—but some have to down this after dinner. (7)

**19** Oh, oh—I hear in minus construction that such bodes ill! (7)

**20** and **7** Become angry with what gun-lovers look into? One might do it in London, Paris or Rome. (3,3,6)

**21** Is one of the ballet members damming things up in Egypt? (5)

**23** Sort of vain, and needing direction, being rather innocent. (5)

**PUZZLED?** No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, *The Nation*, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/print/hints.

## SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2899

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# atomic Digital Technology

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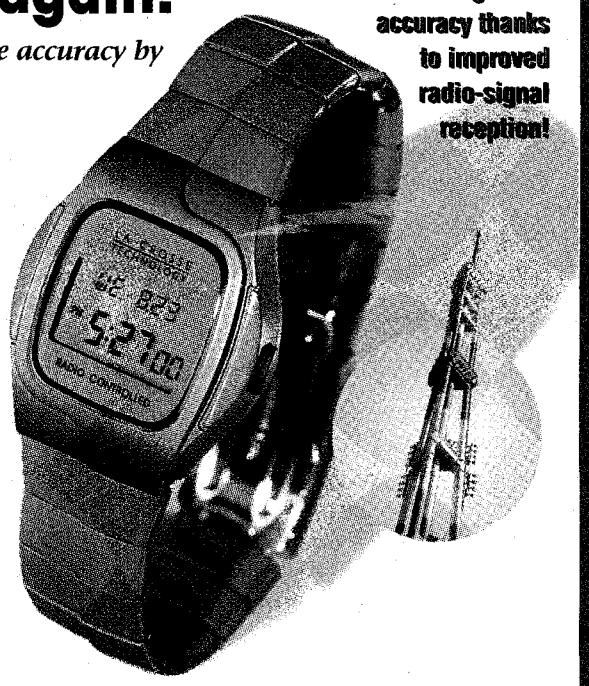


The world has become a smaller place in the past few decades. Transactions take place across the world in an instant. Having a timepiece that can not only keep perfectly accurate time, but also keep track of the time zones can be really helpful and convenient. Now there is a watch that scientifically gives the right time in all zones within a 2,000 mile range of the F-1 Fountain Atomic Clock.

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### Radio wave technology

**Does anyone really know what time it is?**
Well, the U.S. Government wants to, so they created the National Institute of Standards and Technology, a component of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Time and Frequency Division, located in Boulder, Colorado, maintains the F-1 Fountain Atomic Clock, the nation's standard of time. This clock neither gains nor loses a second over a 1 million-year period. This clock is used to create an international time scale, which NIST distributes through its radio stations.

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**Atomic Digital Watch-Titanium Finish**
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